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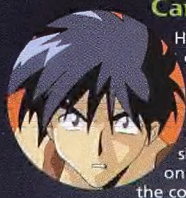

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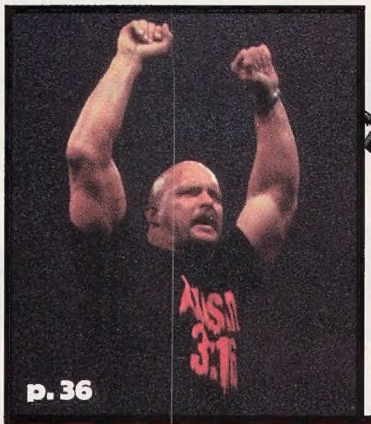
WIZARD contents

THE COMICS MAGAZINE • NUMBER 91 • MARCH 1999

HEY, OVER HERE!

On **page 16**, take a look at how Marvel, DC and company plan on celebrating the new millennium with major story lines, villainous returns and the end of a universe. Then get the skinny on just how you can break into the comic book biz with our handy dandy **"How to Be an Intern"** feature on **page 50**. Just look for this "countdown" icon.



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44 WILD THINGS
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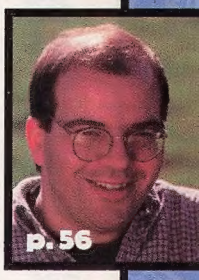
Former X-writer and current Gambit scribe Fabian Nicieza reveals why he's back at Marvel and has softened his stance on never writing the X-Men again. **By Greg Orlando**



ON THE COVERS

Undertaker (left) was illustrated by Rob Brown and Danny Miki, and colored by Liquid Graphics. Slam your way to **page 36** to learn how the World Wrestling Federation is set to bash its way into comics. The **Wildcats** were illustrated by Travis Charest, and colored by WildStorm. Claw your way to **page 44** for a look at the major WildStorm relaunch. The **X-Men** were illustrated by J. Scott Campbell and Alex Garner, and colored by Liquid Graphics. To see what X-writer Fabian Nicieza has in store for Gambit and the rest o' the X-gang, flip to **page 56**.

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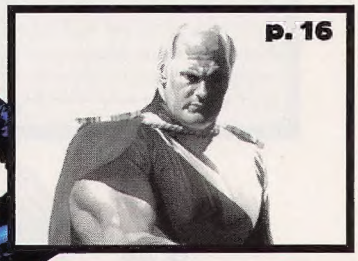
76 EARTH X

Draw us up your own Earth X superhero and take home an Earth X-ian prize package, including original art, a signed script, T-shirt, signed comics and more.

86 DARKMINDS

Do some fancy detective work and you just may win a whole truckload o' Darkminds prizes, including original art, signed comics, variant editions and more!



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EXCLUSIVE OFFERS

COOL STUFF THROUGH THE MAIL

GAMBIT #1/2

Mon dieu! Here's your only chance to get the exclusive *Gambit* #1/2 comic featuring a story that explains just what happened to the Ragin' Cajun after he was stranded in Antarctica in *Uncanny X-Men* #350. It's a spicy number by Fabian Nicieza, Pascual Ferry and Bob Wiacek! Cook your way to **page 96**.

BONE ACTION FIGURE

Holy Moby Dick! We're offering an exclusive Bone action figure (complete with Ted the bug!) from ReSaurus. Sail to **page 109** for details.

PHOTOS: PAUL SCHIRALDI

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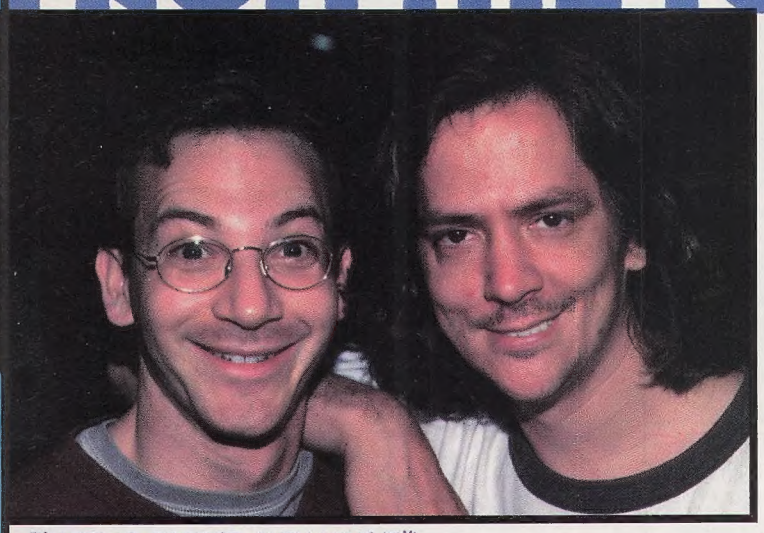

"I'M BEING GOOSED, AND I LOVE IT!"

VIDEO GAME BONANZA

I just got back from a trip to Seattle and San Francisco to meet with all the video game companies from Sony to Sega to Nintendo. The convergence of characters across all media is taking place very quickly. It seemed as if most characters would start out as comic books and then be turned into movies, TV shows, video games and action figures. Now, characters are being created in all mediums and then turned into everything else. Wrestling has done great on TV, is now great in video games and soon to be a comic book with Chaos! Comics. Lara Croft from *Tomb Raider* is soon to be a movie, and is now being published as a special comic through Top Cow. Almost every video game character will be an action figure by the end of 1999. KISS has both a comic book and toy line. And from what I'm seeing there's lots more to come.

This month we take a look at how the wrestling and comic book audiences have been coming together, especially with the release of Chaos! Comics' new *Undertaker* comic coming out. That means we're trying to line up some wrestlers to come to Wizard World Chicago in 1999. Oh, I can't wait. We also tell you how to break in to the comic book industry as an intern, sit down with new *Gambit* writer Fabian Nicieza and look back at the Incredible Hulk's big history. Then there's a feature on the all-new *Wildcats* relaunch by Scott Lobdell and Travis Charest. It looks like it's going to be great. And to get you geared up for the new Star Wars movie (we're already excited), we put together a Star Wars dream team feature, looking at the books and creators we would love to see.

Not only do we have a great *Gambit* #1/2 offer this month, but there's also an exclusive offer for an all-new Bone toy. This could be your last chance to get both of them, so hurry and send in for both.

We also have nine issues to go before *Wizard* 2000, I hope you like our look to the future and would like to hear your comments.

Until next month!
See ya,

Gareb S. Shamus

P.S. Check out our daily updates and news at www.wizardworld.com.

MASTHEAD

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MAGIC WORDS

EARTH-DESTROYING FLASH... MOORE'S BEEF WITH MARVEL... ...AND JIM LEE GETS VIOLENT!

Behold! In a display of maximum efficiency not seen since the invention of the assembly line, I'm gonna answer about 400 monthly "Magic Words" letters at once—with a mere sentence! Now pay close attention, everyone. *Ahem*:

THERE IS *NEVER* ANY NEWS ON THE "SPIDER-MAN" MOVIE!

So save a tree. Save 32 cents postage. Don't bother writing to ask what the latest is on the "Spider-Man" movie, 'cause there is no such animal as a "Spider-Man" movie. Right now, it falls under the general realm of, "Gee, wouldn't that be a nice idea." But there's nothing practical, nothing concrete and nothing happening. So hold your horses. Rest assured, if anything should materialize on a Spider-Movie front, we'll hit you over the head with it so hard in the "Coming Attractions" section, your brain will be packed to the cerebellum with Spider-info.

Meanwhile, back at the magazine ranch, it looks like *Wizard* #89's "Celebrity Death Match" generated a lot of response, including our first letter, from a rather interested party...

Dear Jim,

What can I say about the fantastic renderings of Wonder Woman which Joe Madureira and Mike Turner did for *Wizard*'s "Celebrity Death Match" art duel in issue #89? Oh yeah, I know what I can say: Nice try, guys. But they're both wrong!

Okay, it's an honest mistake that's even occurred in our books (not for much longer, thank you very much), but that doesn't make it right. What's wrong, you ask? Her costume. For future reference—and everyone pay attention here—consider the gold "WW" insignia a separate breastplate (She's a warrior; it's all about the armor, boys.) that goes over the red "bathing suit." The "WW" is not part of that suit. But there's still cleavage potential.

So remember guys: Always look her directly in the eyes, don't wander. And in the meantime, Joe and Mike—nice job. You've got stuff. Keep trying and we'll talk.

Maureen McTigue
Editor, Wonder Woman

The rumors are true. Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned. After being tied up with the golden lasso and beaten with unsold copies of *Wonder Woman* #136, Joe Madureira and Mike Turner both apologized. They were released into the custody of their mothers.

Dear Jim,

The most dangerous man in the DC Universe? It ain't a villain. It's Wally West, the Flash. Give it a little thought. I did, and this is what I came up with.

The Flash can run at light speed, 186,000 miles per second. Not "miles per hour," but miles per second! Running at this speed is useless if you're trying to fight a villain or save someone. In one second at light speed, Wally would circle the Earth several times. Another way to look at it? The escape velocity of Earth's gravity is about 6.9 miles per second. Running at 25,000 times faster than that, the Flash would find himself getting a very close look at the moon in about a second and a half. But wait! It gets worse.

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BUNNY AWARD

Charlie Russell
London, England

1) Send it to: Submissions Editor, c/o Marvel Comics; 387 Park Ave. S.; New York, NY 10016. But don't bother with *What If...?* It's been canceled.

2) According to Tom Brevoort editor for Marvel, your best bet is to "have a good, new fresh idea and get to it incredibly fast. You want your proposal to be the easiest thing the editor has on his desk to read. I've got a pitch sitting here for an Avengers story, but it's 50 or 60 pages long. Chances are I'll never read the whole thing. Short is good. Be short, be gripping, and get right to the point."

As to extras you might try, Brevoort says, "Cookies wouldn't hurt. People have sent cookies with their proposals before, and I've ate them and enjoyed them. But I must admit, I've never recommended we publish something based on cookies alone."

3) Three.

Jim takes his favorite letter and spotlights it here. There's no logic attached to this, nor is there a prize.

This means that if the Flash runs into anything—to punch someone or save someone—at this speed and mass, the impact would destroy whoever or whatever he touches, or perhaps even cause a fusion reaction that could take out a city or two.

Wally is the most dangerous threat the Earth has ever seen. I don't know about you, but I think the Flash should be kicked out of the JLA before he hurts anyone. Or everyone.

Geordie McLellan
ipso-facto@mailexcite.com

Kick him out...or use him as your personal engine of destruction? *Flash* writer and *JLA* fill-in guy Mark Waid chooses the latter. "When Wally runs at top speed," Waid says, "everything you say is true, and has been touched upon here and there during my *Flash* tenure. Which is why I'm sending him after the Marvel Comics Board of Directors tomorrow."

Guess this whole "Kingdom" thing Waid's been working on *does* allow for inter-company crossovers in new and different ways.

Dear Magic Words,

My name is Rosendo Rivera. Everyone in my computer class here at school is writing letters to any place we want. I chose "Magic Words." Witchblade is my favorite comic character, but I have a question: Is Sara Pezzini Mexican or what?

Rosendo Rivera
Hardee Junior High
Wauchula, FL

That would be "what." Actually, she's *almost* Mexican. When the character was conceived back in 1994, Witchblade was gonna be a little *chica* named Sara Lopez. But Top Cow didn't want readers to confuse her with up-and-coming actress Jennifer Lopez. So they kept the "Sara" and the "pez" from Lopez and re-named her Sara Pezzini. She is actually an Italian-American, just like famed canned food icon Chef Boyardee.

Jim,

Hey, I'm Filipino! Besides *Wolverine* penciler Leinil Yu and *Stone* penciler Whilce Portacio, are there more Filipinos in the comic biz?

Alex Sangalang
Guelph, Ontario, Canada

A bunch, actually.

Edgar Tadeo, the guy who regularly inks Leinil Yu on *Wolverine*, is Filipino. So is Gerry Alanguilan, the inker of Avalon Studios' *Stone*.

Continuing in an Avalon mood, Jay Anacleto (*Aria*) and Gilbert Monsanto (*Hellcop*) are also Filipino. And all-purpose inker Jonathan Sibal also hails from the Philippines.

That's a lot for such a small country. Why so many Filipinos in comics? Yu's got a theory: "Well, the Philippines is probably the most 'Americanized' country in Asia," he says. "We eat, drink and breathe American stuff. I guess that's why we love American comics."

And if you think there are a lot of Filipino artists today, try 25 years ago. "I think the Golden Age of Filipino artists was the '70s when Filipino artists—led by Alex Niño—did a lot of comics for DC," Yu says. Joining Niño were Nestor Redondo (*Swamp Thing*), Alfredo Alcala (uh...also *Swamp Thing*), Tony DeZuñiga (*Jonah Hex*) and Romeo Tanghal (the long-time *New Teen Titans* inker). Rudy Nebres (*Vampirella*) and Ernie Chan (*Conan*) also put in long runs on non-DC titles.

Dear Magic Words,

I am a fan of Alan Moore's writing. One day I found a one-shot titled *Heroes for Hope* starring the X-Men, a jam project by a number of creators that was a charity effort for Ethiopian hunger relief. As I looked carefully at the book, I saw Moore wrote pages #15-

BUNNY PHOTO: PAUL SCHRADI.

HEY! IT'S PEN PALS...

Send your name, address, age, sex and three favorite titles to Pen Pals, c/o the "Magic Words" address at the end of this column (put your age on the envelope). The only way to get your Internet address listed instead is to post your info in the Pen Pals board on America Online's "Wizard World" forum (keyword: Wizard; look in the Wizard Bulletin Board, under Message Boards). **Pre-'98 entrants:** Please resend your entries.

#18. Has Alan done any other work for Marvel, and if not, why not?

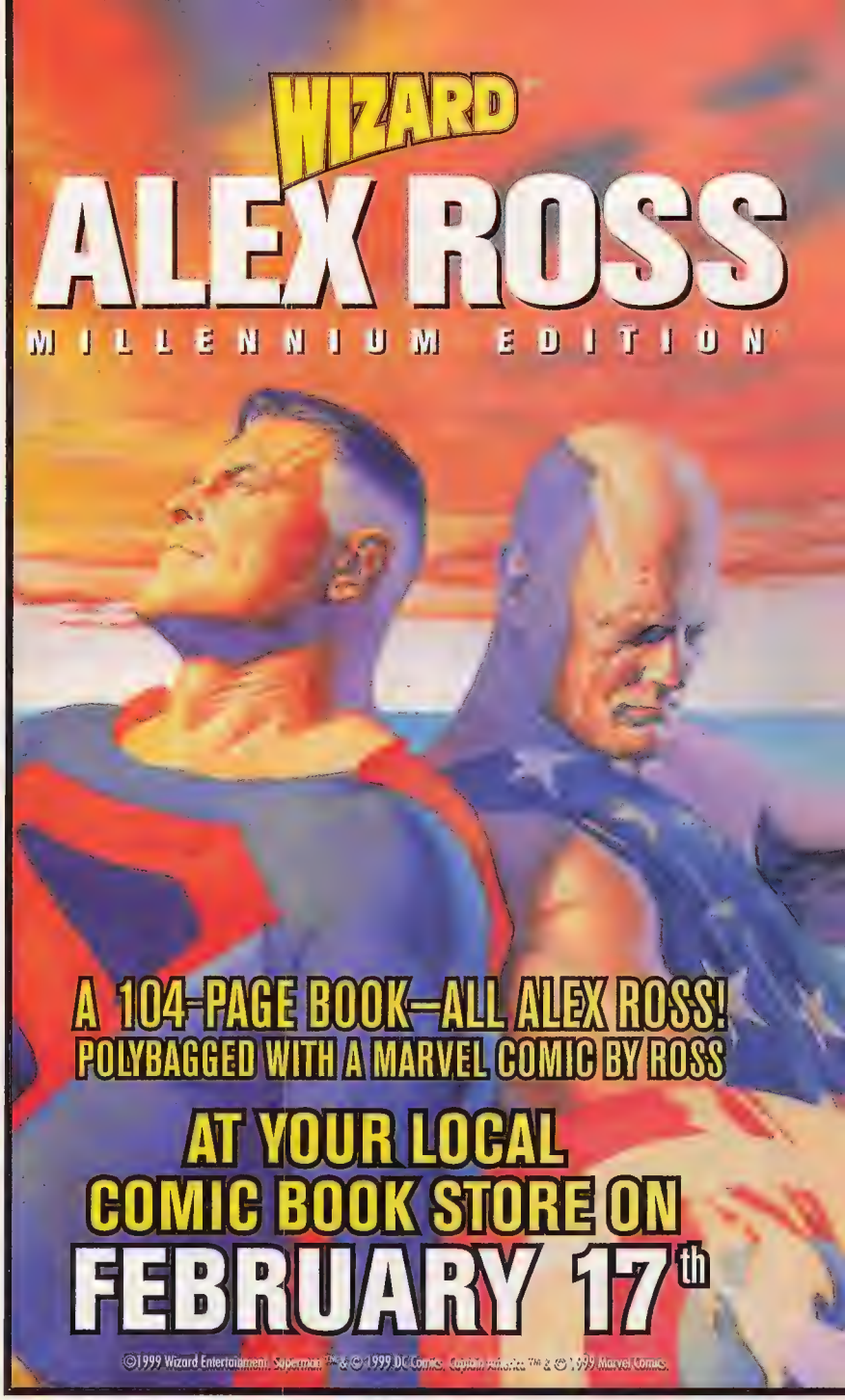
Robert Karol
Raleigh, NC

Englishman Alan Moore has done just a bit of other Marvel work. But don't expect any new stuff. "I did work in the early '80s for Marvel UK—the United Kingdom arm of the international publishing octopus that is Marvel Comics—on the *Captain Britain* title," Moore says. "But problems later arose over *Marvelman*."

It seems *Marvelman* was a title Moore wrote in England that was all the rage. He tried to bring it to the United States, and Eclipse Books was more than happy to publish it. The only problem? Marvel didn't want a comic called *Marvelman* on this side of the pond. Eclipse had to change the name to *Miracleman* for U.S. distribution, despite the fact that Miracleman was copyrighted in England in 1953, and Marvel Comics didn't even exist until 1961.

"I'm sure it's just some vagary of international copyright law, but over here, 1953 happened before 1961," Moore says. "I felt we had a moral claim to the name. But Marvel's lawyers made it pretty clear they could stomp us into the turf on this one. I said, 'Fair enough.' But I'm in a position where I can say that I won't work for Marvel in any capacity. That's what I've done."

Moore made an exception for the charitable *Heroes For Hope*, for what he says should be "fairly obvious reasons." And, he says, "Despite several phone calls from Marvel over the years, I still haven't worked for them. I don't see that changing."



Dear Wizard,

How come I haven't seen a new *Scud* comic out lately?

Sean Lawler
Campbell, CA

'Cause Scud creator Rob Schrab has been bitten by the most vile of menaces to comic book regularity—The Screenplay Bug. Schrab's been cookin' up movie ideas, so *Scud* has gone missing in action and there is nothing currently scheduled.

Hey Jim!

1) Where the heck is *Hepcats*? I'm going through withdrawal! Will there be any new issues?

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313 Councle Bluff Drive
Woodstock, GA 30188
Likes: *Lady Death*, *Satanika*, *Danger Girl*

SABLE LI
Age: 17 Sex: F
116 Blue Ridge Ave.
Chester Gap, VA 22623
Likes: X-Men titles, manga/anime, *The Crow*

SHANE WEBB
Age: 16 Sex: M
8214 W. Potter Rd.
Flushing, MI 48433
Likes: Spider-titles, *Thunderbolts*, X-titles

BRIAN SMITH
Age: 20 Sex: M
306 Blanchard St. #915
Seattle, WA 98121
Likes: *Uncanny X-Men*, Marvel Knights titles, Cliffhanger titles

KEVIN T. KING
Age: 27 Sex: M
P.O. Box 9136
Louisville, KY 40209
Likes: *Avengers*, *Astro City*

PAUL CRUZ
Age: 15 Sex: M
500 Westfield Ave.
Elizabeth, NJ 07208
Likes: *Uncanny X-Men*, *Avengers*, Spider-Man titles

2) Any chance of a *New Warriors* relaunch at Marvel Comics?

Leona Rowe
rsrowe@epix.net

1) *Hepcats* is also missing in action. The last issue out was #12, and publisher Antarctic Press hasn't heard from writer/artist Martin Wagner in over four months. Antarctic is willing to publish a #13 if Wagner resurfaces, but don't expect it anytime soon.

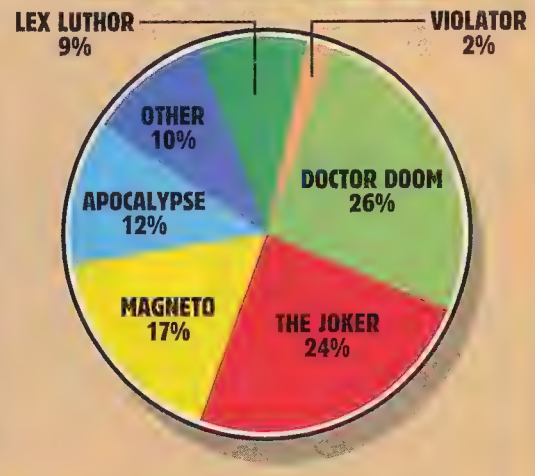
2) Maybe. Former New Warrior Nova has his own book coming in March, and while the New Warriors remain "broken up," Speedball and Namorita will be making appearances there.

And if you could sneak a peek at Marvel's long-range plans, you'd see *New Warriors* as an October possibility. "There are pitches being circulated among editors and there is a movement afoot to bring them back," says Marvel spokesman Bill Roseman.

SURVEY SAYS

ONLINE QUESTION OF THE MONTH

WHAT VILLAIN SHOULD GET HIS OWN SERIES?



Bad is good, baby!

That's what the people were thinking when they voted Victor Von Doom as the villain they'd wanna see in his own series, conducted through an online poll (www.wizardworld.com). "Doom is quite simply the most intriguing and powerful villain in the Marvel Universe," one fan said of Doom. "That, and talking in the third person, is too cool [to not see every month]." In second, the Joker also made a killing with a strong response, many wanting to see more of his "home life" and hopefully, sidekick Harley Quinn. As one fan put it, "The way he acts and thinks would make a great book, and a bonus if they showed the world through the Joker's eyes."

Write-ins from every corner of the spectrum were presented. Baddies ranging from Galactus to *Preacher*'s Herr Starr to Paste Pot Pete were considered as potential stars. But "Paste Pot Pete"? Doesn't anybody realize he's called The Trapster these days? ■ NACHIE CASTRO

Dear Wizard,

Why do some DC Universe comics like *Young Justice* cost $2.50, while others like *JLA* cost $1.99?

Bench McFerrin
Port Jefferson Station, NY

DC says that many different factors go into to pricing books, including paper stock and color process. Also a factor? Anticipated sales. DC can figure that *JLA* will sell better than *Young Justice*, therefore *JLA* is a more profitable book and they can afford to sell it cheaper.

Dear Wizard,

Is Stan Lee's first name "Stan," or is it "Stanley"? 'Cause if it's Stanley, his name would be "Stanley Lee," and that sounds kind of funny. And repetitive.

Kevin Lilley
Brick, NJ

His first name is indeed "Stanley," but it's not so repetitive. Stan's given name is Stanley Martin Lieber. He shortened it to "Stan Lee" when he started writing comics waaaay back in 1941 at the tender age of 17. Why? "I always thought I was going to eventually write the Great American Novel," Stan says. "So I wanted to save my real name for that. I used 'Stan Lee' for comics, and I always thought it would just be a temporary thing." But as time marched on, Stan became pretty famous as a comic writer. Thus, he became better known as Stan Lee. He eventually got his name legally changed to "Stan Lee," and if you look at his driver's license today, that's how it reads.

Dear Mr. McLauchlin,

How do you know all the things you do about comics and the people in the comic industry? Is it from experience and wisdom, or do you just have five flunkies who do research for you while you rake in the big bucks?

And has Jim Lee ever gotten violent? I think that would explain a lot to me.

Michael Chan
Cupertino, CA

As mentioned in *Wizard* #88's "Magic Words," I have no flunkies, although I'm still taking applications. But I do pride myself on having one of the best Rolodexes in comics. I've got damn near everyone's home phone number, so I stay in touch.

And despite the fact that we've made stealing Jim Lee's robe an annual San Diego Comicon occurrence,

DAVID CUNDIFF
Age: 19 Sex: M
P.O. Box 57
Bradley, OK 73011
Likes: *Gun Fury, Maxx, Bauhaus*

JENNIFER TILL
Age: 15 Sex: F
P.O. Box 643
Monroeville, AL 36461
Likes: *Catwoman*, Batman titles, anime

JEFF NELSON
Age: 18 Sex: M
732 Point Brown Ave NE #106
Ocean Shores, WA 98569
Likes: *Cerebus, Bone*, Star Wars titles

MICHAEL HAYES
Age: 17 Sex: M
RR #2
Omewee, Ontario, Canada, K0L 2W0
Likes: *Spawn, Fathom, Danger Girl*

SHAUNDRIA CLAYTON
Age: 17 Sex: F
2859 Spruce Pt. Road
College Park, GA 30349
Likes: *X-Men, Wolverine, Spawn*

CHRIS MARTINEZ
Age: 19 Sex: M
2007 Ballard Dr.
Las Vegas, NV 89104
Likes: *Battle Chasers, Darkchylde*, anime

PERNIE HARRIS
Age: 27 Sex: F
7157 Foxglove Rd.
Coulterville, IL 62337
Likes: Batman titles, *Lobo*, Frank Miller books

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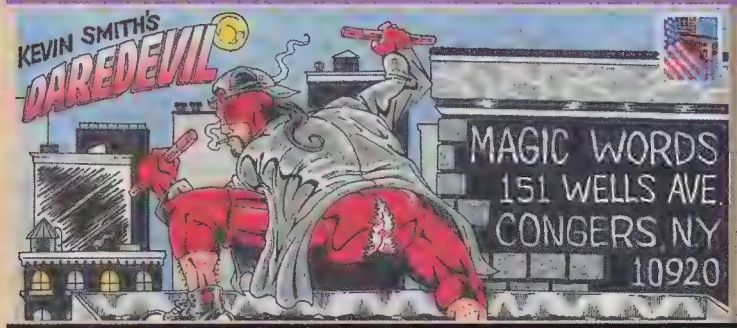
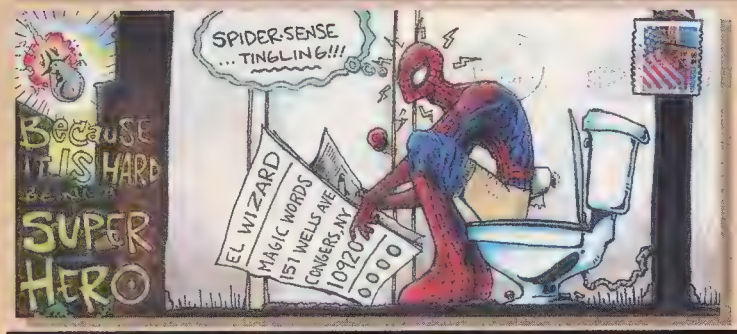
LETTER ART

Each fan who has letter art printed this month will receive a *Shi Battlebooks* comic autographed by artist Billy Tucci, plus a copy of this issue of *Wizard* signed by the entire *Wizard* creative staff! The talented creator of this month's best envelope also scores an original page of *Shi Battlebooks* art. (Prizes provided by Billy Tucci and Battlebooks Inc., Thanks, Billy) ARTISTS: PLEASE INCLUDE A CLEARLY PRINTED RETURN ADDRESS AND A LIST OF CHARACTERS DEPICTED ON THE BACK OF YOUR ENVELOPE. GOOD LUCK!

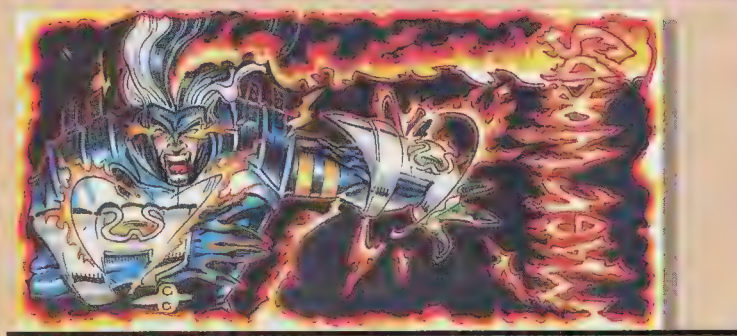
ENVELOPE OF THE MONTH.....THE PRIZE



SILENT BOB AS DAREDEVIL Will Cox Wichita, KS



SPIDER-MAN Irving Martinez San Marcos, CA



ASH John Gravato London, England

SCARY GODMOTHER Joshua Smeaton Riverview, FL

Lee never really gets violent. "I've only been in one fist-fight in my life, and that was back in third grade over some little toy soldiers," Lee says. "I use 'I'm a lover, not a fighter' as my personal life motto."

Wait till I sell his home phone number to the highest bidder. We'll see how lovin' he is then.

Dear Jim,

I was just wondering, what's your view of Japanese cartoons?

Ariel Rodgers
Brooklyn, NY

I usually view them at about 12 feet away from the TV, from my couch. And I like to put my feet up.

Dear Jim,

Me and some friends think you should package *Bunny* #0 with a future *Wizard* issue. You could show all the adventures of the *Wizard* Bunny in his parade around the building with the staff. Can such a thing happen? We think it would be cool. 'Cause we always see little clips of him here and there, but that's just not enough.

Neall Bertram
diamand@frontiernet.net

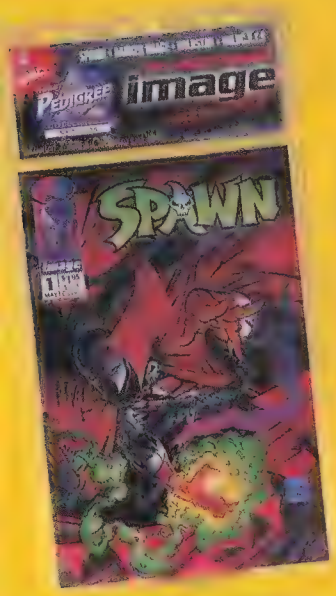
It's a nice idea, but as frequently happens in comics, egos got in the way. We approached the Bunny, but he demanded a four-year, $8.3 million contract with a no-cut clause. He also wanted a key to the executive washroom, a different pie every night of the week and for George Tuska and Bob Wiacek to do the art. We respectfully declined.

And I decline to answer another letter this issue. So until next month, remember always that I remain...

—Jim McLauchlin

Choosy mothers choose Jim McLauchlin!

Send letters to:
Magic Words
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920
or e-mail us at WizWords@aol.com



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MILLENNIUM FEVER!

Comic publishers get ready to party like it's 1999

The dreaded specter of that "Y2K" computer bug has mere mortals quivering in their boots. But those of the superhero community have bigger fish to fry, including stopping horrible destinies and maybe even fighting off the end of their universe.

"It's truly the most wonderful time of the year," Chaos! Comics Publisher Brian Pulido said. "Any publisher worth their salt looks for hooks to get readers stoked about their stuff. And this one, the millennium, is a natural. We'd be stupid if we didn't use this opportunity to dial things up to 11."

Here's a sneak peek at how Chaos! and other comic companies will wrap up 1999 and cash in on "millennium fever."

Cable vs. Apocalypse

We've been waiting 10 years. Now, with December's *Cable* #76, writer Joe Casey and artist José Ladrónn finally determine a winner in the battle between Cable vs. Apocalypse.

"In a continuity sense, the stakes are the future of humanity," Casey said. "We've seen Apocalypse's future in a mini-series or two, and it's not a nice world." Apocalypse, a twisted geneticist, believes in the survival of the fittest. Cable, a warrior from the future, has come back in time to put the kibosh on Apocalypse. And Casey hopes to get even more out of the year-end storyline, which may cross over into all X-Men books.

COUNTDOWN TO WIZARD 2000

"I'm sick of the X-Men's future being pre-ordained," Casey stated. "I want a wide-open future where we don't have to move toward [the bleak 1980 storyline] 'Days of Future Past' or Apocalypse or whatever. That's what Cable is all about. He came from a bleak future, but he wants to open our world to better possible futures."

Casey swears he has a winner figured out, and hints that the battle might also be his *Cable* swan song. "I'm not saying who will win or lose," Casey said. "But I will say that José and I look forward to the 21st century to work together on new projects."

JLA: Who Will Die?

Meanwhile, over at DC Comics, Armageddon will come to the pages of *JLA*.

Mageddon is the name of a new JLA nemesis who's looking to bring all-out war to the DC Universe. But don't blame him for a bad attitude—he's just built that way. "Mageddon is a living weapon of the Old Gods," *JLA* writer Grant Morrison said, referring to the race of ancient beings who preceded the current life in our universe. Once he hits Earth, Mageddon will fulfill his function, unleashing war. And since he's so damn big (and gets a couple hundred supervillains on his side), the ramifications are big. "The goal is to have war break out everywhere simultaneously in the DC Universe," Morrison said. There's no official word as to whether or not "The Mageddon War" will become the center of an all-DC crossover, but the possibility exists "The heroes will be fighting off the end of the world," Morrison said.

As with any war, casualties will happen. One may be the popular Morrison, who hasn't specified an issue yet, but will take his leave of *JLA* upon the story's conclusion. And although

NEW BAT CITY Batman Editor Dennis O'Neil's Bat-plans for 2000 could mean a rebuilt Gotham City, a new costume and more Bat-titles.

Morrison will not spill the beans, popular conception holds that he will bump off JLA member Zauriel on his way out.

A New Gotham?

The one place DC's "Mageddon War" will *not* touch is Gotham City. Batman's haunt is locked and loaded for the whole of 1999 with "No Man's Land," the story of an earthquake-devastated Gotham.

But come 2000? The sky's the limit. "The Batman books will revamp themselves," Batman Group Editor Dennis O'Neil said. While actual storylines are still well down the pike, a segmentation of the Bat-universe may occur. "We may try some new visuals," O'Neil said. "Redesign some logos to point out to readers, if you like detective stories, come here. If you like superheroes, come here." O'Neil also says he "wouldn't rule out costume redesign" on Batman or other characters. "All it would take is an artist coming up with a better idea. We've done it before."

Another part of Batman in 2000? Quite possibly, new books. "We will probably have a new title or two," O'Neil said. "No Man's Land" introduces a number of new characters to DC, including Harley Quinn and a new Batgirl. "We'll wait for reaction—both the readers and our own—and take it from there," according to O'Neil.

Chaos! Armageddon

Chaos! Comics' countdown is more than a year in the making. A box in the upper right corner of all the company's books has been telling readers how many months "until the end." Soooo...what's the end? "I am literally promising that Armageddon comes to the Chaos! Cosmos," Pulido said. The man bringing it? Pulido himself.

In 1998, Chaos! founder Pulido expanded the company on business and licensing fronts. He scarcely wrote a book. For '99, Pulido says he's "back in the writing saddle, giving people what they want, but hopefully not in the way they expect it."

What they want is Evil Ernie, a zombie teen, and his quest for Megadeath. They also want Lady Death, ruler of Hell and the puppeteer pulling Ernie's strings. They'll get it, as the eradication of all life on Earth inches closer and closer. But there will be a twist. "We introduce the notion that Lady Death is the one who can choose the outcome in the Armageddon war between Heaven and Hell," Pulido says.

But the Lady's choice is a surprise that won't be unwrapped until January 1, 2000. Will Chaos! actually do it? Will it kill its own universe? "People say we're crazy enough to do it," Pulido said. "And I can find lots of ways to pay the mortgage."

Doom Returns!

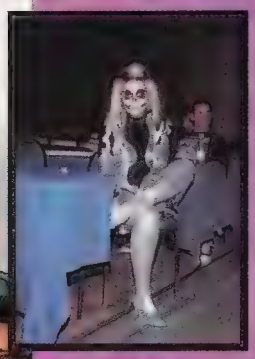
No end is worth anything if it doesn't lead to a new beginning. So as you turn your calendar to Jan. 1, 2000, look for a harbinger of doom along with your hangover—Marvel arch-villain Dr. Doom.

The not-so-good Doctor has been missing since 1996's "Onslaught" saga. But long-range plans indicate Marvel's year 2000 will start with "The Return of Doom," a crossover involving the entire Marvel Universe in which Doom makes his way back from whatever limbo he's been stuck in for the last four years. Chances are, he won't be happy.

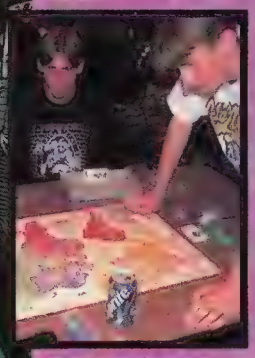
■ JIM McLAUCHLIN

IMPENDING DOOM Marvel kicks off the new millennium with the return of Dr. Doom, absent for three years from the Marvel Universe.

Toxic Spill kills five at comic con. "People! Can't you smell it?!? Get out!" yelled confused rescue workers to stench-immune comic fans.



Comic con mixer goes horribly awry as one woman shows up and her name is "Carl". "Hey," the gravely-voiced vixen said between drags of cigarettes and gulps of black coffee, "When the lights go out I'm as soft as any girl."



Strike team of comic fans plan world domination/taping of Cinemax late-night movies. "First falls France!" exclaimed the grotesquely underdeveloped Milty Stein, "then we see Monique Gabrielle's cans! Whoo-hoo!"

PHOTOS BY PAUL SCHRADE

ORDWAY TAKES ON 'AVENGERS'

Busiek and Pérez take vacation, due back in early summer

Jerry Ordway wants to avoid alienating *Avengers* readers. "Three months only," Ordway said. "That's it."

The former *Power of Shazam!* creator makes sure fans know his stint handling both the writing and penciling chores for Earth's Mightiest Heroes is a temporary assignment: three issues, #16-#18, March through May. He knows the absence of fan favorites Kurt Busiek and George Pérez, getting a three-month breather from the top 20 book, leaves big shoes to fill.

"Kurt and George found a way to get back to what made *Avengers* so good when I read it as a kid, while keeping the stories modern and dynamic," Ordway said.

So Ordway expects his greatest challenge will be keeping his *Avengers* from seeming like fill-in issues. "This isn't a pocket universe. My stories will tie into all the stuff Kurt and George have done and will do when they return."

Ordway will serve up a story of the former Captain Marvel (now Photon) in a story set in her native New Orleans during Mardi Gras, a visit from former Avenger Warbird and a tale of the other-dimensional Arkon. "I've loved these characters for a long time, and that's going to be at the heart of my stories," Ordway said.

When Ordway's three months are up, the Avengers gear up for a battle with their longtime nemesis Ultron. And Marvel True Believers might catch glimpses of more Ordway, who's just inked an issue of *Thor*, down the line. "I'm extremely happy with this opportunity to work at Marvel again after more than a decade away," he said. "Maybe I'll stick around for a while." ■ TRENT D. McNEELEY

JERRY RIGGED Ordway (below), who fills in on *Avengers* for three months, will bring back Warbird (left), Photon and Arkon.

THE BUZZBIN

THE INSIDE SCOOP ON THE COMIC INDUSTRY

LEE FOR DC! He says his first priority is finishing *Divine Right*. But after that, Jim Lee says, "I will do one big DC project in 1999. It won't be Batman. It won't be Superman. But it will be big."

WOLVIE VS. HULK?

BIG BRUISER BATTLE! October marks Wolverine's 25th anniversary. And seein' as how he debuted in an issue of *Incredible Hulk*, Wolvie just may be planning a big dust-up with the Hulk instead of a birthday party.

CASEY TO THE X-MEN! Do-it-all writer Joe Casey is in the planning stages for an X-Men mini-series with artist Steve Rude late in the year. It may focus on the early days of the team.

HORNHEAD GOES TO GOTHAM! Earthquake be damned! Batman's still a busy guy. Look for Bats to star in an inter-company crossover with Marvel's Daredevil this summer. There's no word on creators yet, but maybe "Clerks" screenwriter and *Daredevil* scribe Kevin Smith is interested...?

HEAVY METAL HEROES! Summer should see the launch of "Marvel Tech," a new imprint focusing on three Marvel "technological" heroes: Deathlok, Magus and X-51, the Machine Man. Editor Matt Idelson is sorting through dozens of pitches, so creative teams aren't solid yet. But Joe Casey (Again!) is in the mix.

GO, JOE! It's still in the negotiating stages, but toy manufacturer Hasbro is looking to license a G.I. Joe comic once again. Rumored to be the writer? Larry Hama, who did over 100 *Joe* issues at Marvel.

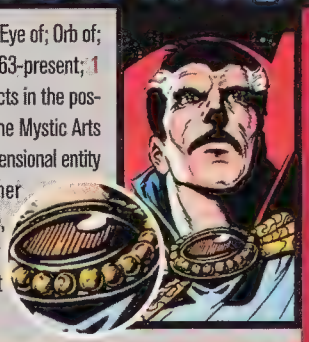
MARVEL MAYHEM! Looking for an all-Marvel blowout? You just might get one come September. "The Domination Factor" is the working title for a proposed Fantastic Four/Avengers crossover. Rumored to be dominating the credits box? New Marvel guy Jerry Ordway and his old Superman partner, Dan Jurgens.

HEROES REBORN AGAIN? Hey, it's just sitting there and nobody's using it. Rumblings at Marvel point to the possibility of revisiting the Heroes Reborn "pocket universe" sometime late in '99.

we looked it up

WHO? WHERE? WHY?

AG•A•MOT•TO *(og ä MOT to)*, Eye of; Orb of; proper noun, Marvel Universe. 1963-present; 1 Two vastly powerful magical artifacts in the possession of Dr. Strange, Master of the Mystic Arts 2 Objects empowered by extra-dimensional entity Agamotto to open portals to other dimensions and see through space, time and disguises 3 Latest hipster flavored coffee blend available at your local Starbucks.



oops!

OUR BAD

- The "Superman Lives!" piece from *Wizard* #89's "Coming Attractions" section was miscredited. The author was Marc Shapiro.
- A clarification from *Wizard* #89's "We Are the World" feature: DC Comics are available in more than 100 countries worldwide.

STAN LEE FORMS NEW COMPANY

Stan Lee, the man who has been Mr. Marvel for 58 years, has a new boss—himself.

MR. LEE "Mr. Marvel" no more?

Stan Lee Media is a new company the longtime Marvel Comics publisher has founded under the terms of a new and different contract with Marvel. In Stan's new capacity, he holds the honorary title of Marvel's "chairman emeritus," and for the first time in his career, is no longer Marvel-exclusive. "All my life, I've been promoting Marvel to the best of my ability," Lee said. "Stan Lee Media will address the entire comic book medium."

Which is not to say Lee won't be found at some familiar haunts. He'll still write the "Spider-Man" daily newspaper strip and answer questions for "Stan's Soapbox" in Marvel's "Bullpen Bulletins" column.

But Lee is expanding, first with a Web site found at www.stanlee.net. "It's like a huge clubhouse for comics fans all over the world," Lee said. "The main reason is to bring new readers to comics. We've lost quite a lot of audience in recent years." To bring them in, the man who created Spider-Man, Hulk and Fantastic Four will be creating new characters and new stories that he will own, and possibly spin into other media. "We have TV and animation projects in development at the various networks," Lee said, "and a video game not far down the pike."

And that's not all. If, say, DC Comics put in the call, Stan could wind up writing a story there. "I'm free to do anything at all," Lee said. "I'd never do anything detrimental to Marvel. I still feel so much a part of it. But exclusivity is no longer an issue."

So why start a new business at age 76? "Fishing's pretty boring," Lee said. "I think I've got an imagination. Why would I want to stop using it?" ■ JIM McLAUCHLIN

...and they're off!

BETTIN' THE PONIES

Looking for the busiest writer in comics this month? It's a horse race. Take a look and see if one of your favorites is headed for the winner's circle...or the glue factory.

CHUCK DIXON	138	Birds of Prey, Conjurers, Green Lantern: The New Corps, Nightwing, Robin
DEVIN GRAYSON	132	Batman, Detective, Legends of the Dark Knight, Shadow of the Bat, Catwoman, Titans
KURT BUSIEK	102	Avengers, Avengers Forever, Iron Man, Thunderbolts
JOHN BYRNE	94	Hulk, Spider-Man Chap., Doc. Superman & Batman: Generations
KARL KESEL	80	Adv. of Superman, World's Finest, Superboy

* Writers are ranked by approximate number of pages written in February.

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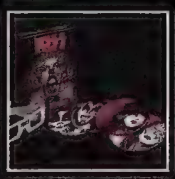

Psycho Circus 3-D Video

Written, Produced and Directed by Tommy Thayer • Edited by Joe Bolanna, Teresa Lang, Adam Rosenblatt and Matt Lian • Executive Producer: Doc McGhee

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WHO ARE THE TWELVE?

A MERRY MUTANT MYSTERY

Marvel Comics first dropped hints waaaay back in 1987's *X-Factor* #14 about "The Twelve," a group of 12 mutants who will play a crucial role in mutantkind's future.

Now, 12 years later, writer Joe Casey is finally naming The Twelve in the pages of *Cable* this summer. "They're 12 specific people, all pre-ordained," Casey said. "And it's not like they're just part of some mutant harmonic convergence. There's a task, a function critical to mutantkind, that only these 12 can perform together, like it or not."

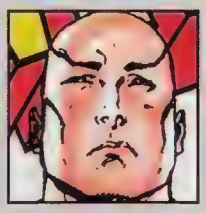
X-Factor #14 named Apocalypse, Cyclops, Franklin Richards, Jean Grey and Storm as five of The Twelve. Who might the others be? Casey provides speculation. *Wizard* provides the odds:

CABLE

"Well, he's 'The Gatherer of The Twelve,' and it's all happening in his book. Need I say more?" **Odds:** Even. Cable's the obvious shoo-in.

KITTY PRYDE

"I get very nervous when it comes to Kitty, like someone might get jealous if I put her in The Twelve. That doesn't mean I won't do it." **Odds:** 7-1. Whip-smart Kitty may be the Twelve's brains.

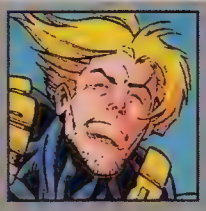


PROFESSOR X

"In my opinion, the single most important character in the X-mythos. Xavier has always gone where angels fear to tread." **Odds:** 2-1. Charles Xavier is usually there when big mutant happenings happen.

MYSTIQUE

"Love this character! But if I have my way, my plans involving Mystique would take her down a much different–and much more exciting–path." **Odds:** 15-1. Look for Casey to play with Mystique in other arenas.

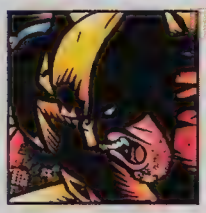


CANNONBALL

"An important person in Cable's life. Although their connection has been downplayed lately, that'll change in coming months." **Odds:** 2-1. Cannonball is already an "External"–an immortal mutant. And he'll play a huge role in *X-Force* this year.

SABRETOOTH

"He's got no morals whatsoever. As a soldier, Cable could really appreciate a guy like that." **Odds:** 25-1. Sabretooth is either a loner or a follower, not a leader.

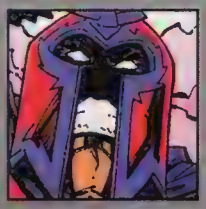


WOLVERINE

"I think Wolverine should concentrate on getting his friggin' adamantium back. THEN maybe The Twelve." **Odds:** 3-1. Hey, he's commercial. Want readers to show up? Wolverine appearances help.

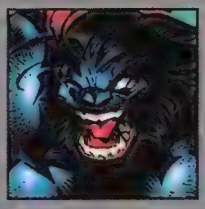
X-MAN

"Um...I'm not too big on dopplegangers. When Cable's around, Nate Grey seems a bit redundant." **Odds:** 50-1. This Cable-from-another-dimension would just be repetitive.



MAGNETO

"I'm not sure you can rule a country and be one of The Twelve. I think it says that in the *So You Want To Be One Of The Twelve?* information booklet. **Odds:** 3-1. Casey's dreamin'. Magneto's lot in life is to lead.

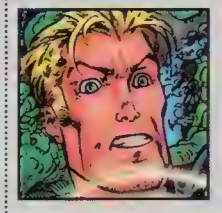


BEAST

"Keep the Beast in the Avengers, where he belongs." **Odds:** 100-1. Sounds like Hank McCoy is out of the mix.

NAMOR

"Supposedly the first mutant. Does that qualify him for a slot in The Twelve? He's not much of a joiner." **Odds:** 5-1. Namor doesn't seem an obvious choice, but he's a born leader and a former king.



HAVOK

Havok: "We'd have to get him out of that alternate dimension first. And his *Mutant X* sells better than *Cable*. The readers have spoken." **Odds:** 200-1. 'Nuff said. ■ **JIM McLAUCHLIN**

WHAT THE HECK IS 'HYPERTIME'?

If the concept of "Hypertime" leaves you scratching your head, you're not alone. The unifying DC Comics concept that debuted in December's *Kingdom* #2 will have major ramifications in the DC Universe, and *Wizard* wants to clear up any confusion.

1) WHAT IS 'HYPERTIME'?

"Hypertime" is not a *time* at all. It's a bridge to existing alternate realities.

"The DC Universe now has everything open to it," said Grant Morrison, the *JLA* writer who helped cook up Hypertime. "If we decide to bring the Golden Age Batman across from pre-*Crisis on Infinite Earths* DC, or something from the Tangent Universe, there's now a way to do it. Hypertime means that everything you ever saw in a DC comic was true."

Think of the DC Universe as one timeline, DC's Tangent Universe as another, and even Marvel as yet another. Technically, nothing *ever* published by DC is off-limits. Not the *Watchmen* Universe. Not the one in *The Dark Knight Returns*. Or *DC versus Marvel*.

Simply put, a DC Multiverse is back.

2) WHAT IS THE 'DC MULTIVERSE'?

Before 1985, DC didn't have a single universe, it had a "multiverse"—an infinite number of alternate realities and universes. DC simplified its "multiverse" in the 1985-1986 mini-series titled *Crisis on Infinite Earths* by combining the best of all of 'em into one. One universe with one revised timeline. To clean up the singular universe some more, DC unleashed *Zero Hour* in 1994.

3) DOES HYPERTIME UNDO 'CRISIS' AND 'ZERO HOUR'?

Not according to "Kingdom Event" writer Mark Waid. "It doesn't undo anything," Waid said. "In fact, 'Hypertime' says they both happened. This is not a cosmic restart button here. 'Hypertime' just says that every story you ever read is true."

Including *Crisis*? How can a multiverse live in harmony with the story that destroyed the multiverse? "*Crisis* destroyed all the multiverses that we knew of," Waid continued. "Whatever was wiped out in *Crisis* was still wiped out. It's just that more existed."

4) HOW DOES HYPERTIME AFFECT THE CURRENT DCU?

By opening it up to the possibilities of *Dark Knight*. Or *Sugar and Spike*. Or whatever. Stories can now take place on any timeline, and they all "count."

Hypertime is happening in the DCU right now in the five-part "Hyper-Tension" storyline that began in January's *Superboy* #60, where the Teen of Steel investigates another timeline's Superboy found dead on the moon. Superboy travels through Hypertime, and in the end, he'll "come back" from Hypertime. "The main DC Universe is still what we see published in these books every month," Waid said. "Unless something else changes, it's still the timeline based on and established by *Crisis*."

5) HOW WILL HYPERTIME BE USED IN THE FUTURE?

Waid said Hypertime "will float through selected DC books on a carefully charted basis in 1999, with *Flash* the next likely candidate." Waid also said Hypertime is more than just a way to validate old, out-of-date stories. "It's a bridge to the future," he said. "For year 2000, we're planning the first major Hypertime event. Grant and I want to throw the doors open again. Anything is possible." ■ MATTHEW BRADY AND JIM McLAUCHLIN

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AARDVARK-VANAHEIM

March sees the on-time-like-clockwork release of *Cerebus* #240, part nine of the 34-issue "Going Home" series. Sixty issues remain until the series ending issue #300.

AWESOME ENTERTAINMENT

Menace #1 is available as a signed edition in March with a $19.95 suggested retail. It's autographed by artist Dan Fraga and writer/actress Jada Pinkett-Smith.

BATTLEBOOKS INC.

Battlebooks for Top Cow's The Darkness and Crusade's Tomoe hit in March.

CHAOS! COMICS

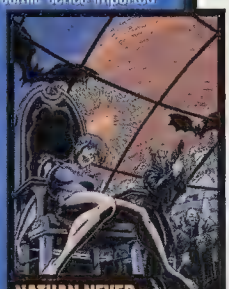
Creator Brian Pulido returns to the book that started it all for him as he writes March's *Evil Ernie* #10.

CHECKER COMICS

The artistic stylings of Simon Bisley, Bill Sienkiewicz, Brent Anderson and Neal Adams will be displayed on covers to some of Checker's upcoming books as the company begins selling its books directly through the Internet at www.checkercomics.com.

DARK HORSE COMICS

Six explorers race to retrieve alien technology in Paul Chadwick's *(Concrete)* new comic *The World Below*. *Below* debuts in March. March also sees publication of *Dark Horse Presents* #141, an issue devoted to nothing but Buffy the Vampire Slayer stories. Go Italian with March's *Dylan Dog*, *Martin Mystery* and *Nathan Never*, three new black-and-white, six-issue comic series imported from Italy.


NATHAN NEVER

DC COMICS

Scene of the Crime is a new Vertigo mini-series launching in March written by Ed Brubaker (*Detour*) with art by Michael Lark (*Terminal City*).

HARRIS COMICS

It's the end of the world as we know it? *Vampirella: World's End* #1 (issue #13 of the monthly *Vampirella* comic) heralds the beginning of the end in March. Story and art is provided by David Conway, Steven Grant, Patrick Zircher, Gary Martin and *Ascensions* David Finch.

IMAGE COMICS

March sees *Lady Pendragon* #0, a one-shot tale spanning 30 centuries.

• Avalon Studios

Aria #1 Blanc & Noir is a re-presentation of Aria #1 featuring the raw, grayscale pencils of the amazing Jay Anacleto. Look for it in March.

• Highbrow

Romance is in the air, even though the cover of *Savage Dragon* #59 has a bunch of guys beating each other up on it. Dragon's getting sweet on a girl in March and writer/artist Erik Larsen wants

cont'd →

'DARKMINDS' STINT EARNS LEE MARVEL GIG

The "Marvel Knights" imprint has made its name by stirring up the House of Ideas. And Knights' newest combination of Punisher, Wolverine and red-hot penciler Pat Lee should mix well.

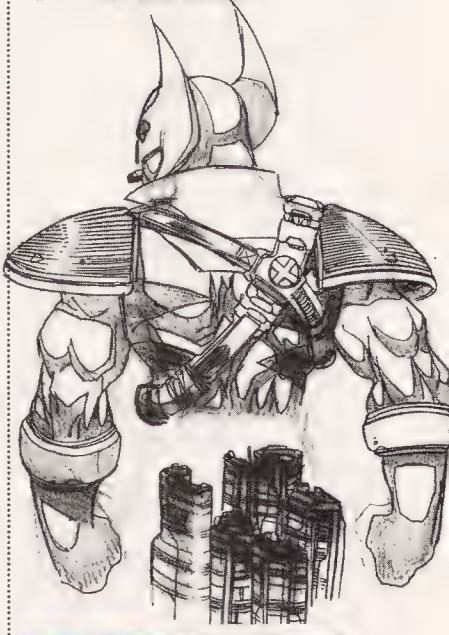
Fresh off a surprise-hit run as artist and co-writer of his manga-influenced *Darkminds* mini-series for Image Comics, Lee will move to a four-issue Punisher/Wolverine mini-series beginning in April. The as-yet-untitled series teams the two characters against an evil presence unleashed beneath the streets of New York City. For Lee, the Marvel Knights offer was simply too good to refuse. "Wolverine was always my favorite character," he said. "How could I say no?"

Joining Lee is the writing team of Chris Golden and Tom Sniegoski, writers of last year's Knights *Punisher* mini-series. The duo will introduce a number of new robotic players to the Marvel Universe, allowing Lee to go crazy on character design, which is one of his favorite endeavors.

Knights co-editor Joe Quesada is looking forward to what Lee does on the new designs. "A lot of the manga that we see in American comics right now is kind of a watered-down American version," Quesada said. "Pat's doing something that's really only done well by the Japanese."

Which is fine by co-editor Jimmy Palmiotti. "We're trying to put different looks and different spins on the characters," he said. "*Darkminds* has been a lot of fun, and this is going to have the same wild flavor to it."

According to Lee, next up after the Punisher/Wolverine series is a new fantasy-oriented series, followed by the next installment of *Darkminds* in 2000. ■ DEAN SIMAKIS



KNIGHT MOVES Lee, of *Darkminds* fame, will be giving Wolverine (above) and Punisher temporary new designs in April's mini-series.

DEATH ROW INMATE CREATES COMIC

Mood Comics has published a comic book first—*Donjonhoefen*, a graphic novel created by a death row inmate.

Sean Sellers, convicted of murder 13 years ago at age 16 following the killing of a convenience store clerk and his own parents, is scheduled to be executed by the state of Oklahoma on Feb. 4, 1999. While friends work to get the Satanist-turned-Christian a stay of execution, those same friends—Mood's owners—are marketing his 160-page work.

Katie Kane, co-owner of Mood, said the superhero-genre storyline is a partial reflection of Sellers' own life: "What he's lived through and all the experiences he's had are embedded in the book in allegory."

Sellers' storyline features a scientist on the run, both from robots of his own creation and the authorities. It's Sellers' shot at redemption, and expression of remorse. "I chose to do something to make up for my life's failures," Sellers said.

Donjonhoefen is available now with a cover price of $12.95. ■ SCOTT A. AUBREY

POPEYE, THE MARRIED MAN?

David to write historic tale

No more stolen kisses on the poop deck.

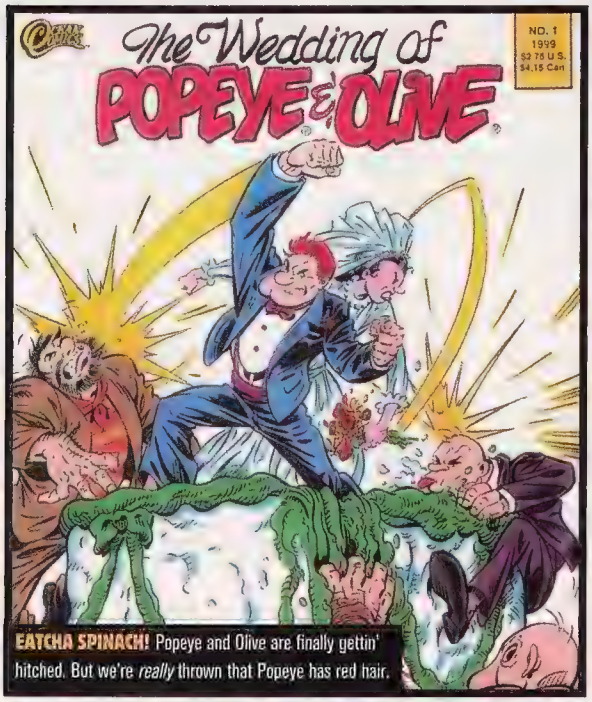
Popeye, the legendary comic strip sailor man, will finally tie the knot with his beloved Olive Oyl in an offering from Ocean Comics. Selected to preside over the festivities? Sci-fi and superhero writer Peter David, he of *Incredible Hulk* and *Supergirl* fame.

The catalyst for the wedding seems to be a little-known supporting character. "Eugene the Jeep is a small creature from the fifth Dimension who has the power of prophecy," David explained. "Popeye wonders out loud whether he and Olive Oyl will ever get married. To his amazement, Eugene responds in the affirmative." Popeye's brutish enemy Bluto, however, refuses to offer his blessings. Enter conflict.

When approached by Ocean to handle Popeye's nuptials, David leaped at the chance: "I've always loved Popeye. It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

The Wedding of Popeye and Olive one-shot, illustrated by Dave Garcia, hits racks in February. Bring your own spinach.

■ JAKE ROSSEN



EATCHA SPINACH! Popeye and Olive are finally gettin' hitched. But we're *really* thrown that Popeye has red hair.

contest winners

LUCKY STIFFS

• Rob MacKinnon of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada got busted with a Randy Bowen Designs Deadpool bust and more *Deadpool* comics than you can blast with a rocket-propelled grenade launcher in *Wizard* #87's "Dress Up Deadpool!" contest!

• John Ebrite of Okemah, Okla., won original art by new *Witchblade* artist Randy Green along with a *Witchblade* CD soundtrack and Witchblade action figures as the winner of *Wizard* #87's "Oh-So-Scary Witchblade!" contest!

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WITCHBLADE INFINITY

to tell you all about it.
• Top Cow Comics March's *Witchblade Infinity* one-shot is a "*What If...?*" take on what would happen if Sara Pezzini never got the Witchblade. It's brought to you by Scott Lobdell (*X-Men*) and Adam Pollina (*X-Force*).

KITCHEN SINK PRESS
James O'Barr's *The Crow* #3 features a story by sci-fi author John J. Miller, who contributed to the popular *Wild Cards* novel series. Miller tells tales of Dreux Dumaine, the world's newest Crow. Look for it in March.

MARVEL COMICS
Yowza! Acclaimed *Daredevil* writer Kevin Smith (originally slated for a six-issue run) is now on *DD* through #81. The Harbinger of Apocalypse is back in February's *Cable* #66. Joe Casey and José Ladronn bring you the action.

ONI PRESS
Chynna Clugston-Major's "Blue Monday" will appear in *Oni Double Feature* #11. "Blue Monday" is chock full o' '80s references and John Hughes-esque adventures inspired by Clugston-Major's teenage years.

PENNY FARTHING PRESS
Comic art legend and innovator Jim Steranko paints the cover of *The Victorian* #1, coming in March.

QUANTUM CAT ENTERTAINMENT
Avalon creators Brian Haberlin and Whitney Porter introduce a new character called Jinn in March's *Frank Frazetta Fantasy Illustrated* #6.

SIRIUS ENTERTAINMENT
Kyle Hotz (*Mosaic*), Jason Alexander (*Family Jewels*), and the inimitable Joseph Michael Linsner (*Dawn*) all make short-story contributions to March's *Crypt of Dawn* #6.

VANGUARD PRODUCTIONS
The *Tales From the Edge: Bernie Wrightson Special* featuring legendary *Creepy*, *Eerie* artist Bernie Wrightson is available in a signed edition in March. Retail is $18 and proceeds go toward covering Wrightson's recent medical expenses.

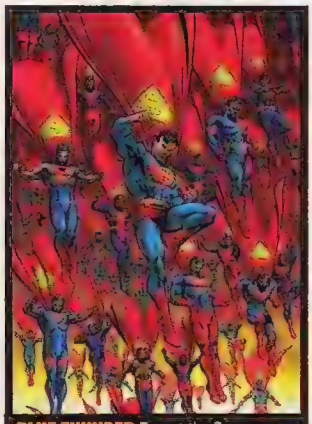
VIZ COMICS
Get ready, get set—Gil Young Pokémon (pocket monster) prime. Ash competes in a race to see which Pokémon is the fastest and which trainer is the best in Viz's *Pokémon: Pikachu's Rescue Red* #1. The world's most popular manga is taken to Americanized shores for the first time in *Dragon Ball Z Vol. Two* #1, seen great in March.

SUMMIT TO SET MAN OF STEEL'S COURSE

Change is in store for Superman, but this time it's not about his costume. In response to lagging sales on Man of Steel books, DC Comics has shuffled its creative teams on the five "Superman" books.

Out are creators Tom Grummett, Dan Jurgens, Karl Kesel, Jerry Ordway and Louise Simonson. In are...well, no one knows yet. But new Superman Editor Eddie Berganza has scheduled a "Superman Summit" to plan a new course for Big Blue. Ordway said DC wants a fresh look, and wasn't willing to give current creators a chance at new storylines. "I wanted to plot new stories, but was told I'm associated with the 'Old Guard,'" Ordway said.

New creators are expected to hit the box by July. Expected to survive the creative changes are Mark Shultz and Doug Mahnke (*Superman: The Man of Steel*) and Stuart Immonen (*Action Comics*). DC Comics declined all comment. ■ **TRENT D. McNEELEY**


BLUE THUNDER Expect the Superman credit boxes to have almost all new names next summer.

THUMBING OFF

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

THUMBS UP

DC'S TITANS: DC's classic team of Titans has reunited thanks to both *JLA vs. Titans* and *Titans*. This new lineup, headlined by Nightwing and Flash, has a new mission to train the next generation of heroes. And what makes this bunch so endearing is the family interaction they all share. Case in point–in *Titans* #1, Flash half-jokingly makes a $10 bet that he can outlast the cynical Nightwing on this version of the team.

QUALITY FILL-INS: Kudos to publishers not skimping on writers and artists on fill-in issues. Superman alum Jerry Ordway will write and draw *Avengers* #16–#18, *Cable*'s Joe Casey pitches in on *Thunderbolts* and a *Thor* issue will go to ex-Thor artist John Buscema. We're happy publishers can still deliver the goods when the "regulars" take a vacation.

COMICS BRANCHING OUT: *Undertaker* comics? *Resident Evil* magazines? *Tomb Raider/Witchblade* one-shots? Boo-yah! It's great to see publishers tapping into other popular forms of entertainment. Now if we could only see a monthly *Tomb Raider* comic.

THUMBS DOWN

DC CONTINUITY: First came *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, which failed to streamline DC continuity. Then came *Zero Hour*, which couldn't clean up *Crisis* continuity. Now there's *Kingdom*'s Hypertime, which takes us back to DC's pre-*Crisis* continuity muck. Either way, DC continuity is a mess...and it looks like it will always be that way.

SPIDEY RELAUNCH: Peter Parker isn't even Spider-Man for the first issues of both *Amazing* and *Peter Parker: Spider-Man*! Core fans are turned off and new ones are ticked when they learn the "new" Spidey was a cheap two-issue stunt. When is Marvel gonna learn that screwing with Spidey–and his fans–ain't a good idea?

COBALT BLUE: Let's get this straight: Flash's new nemesis Cobalt Blue is the evil twin brother of deceased Flash Barry Allen, was separated at birth, grew up with evil gypsy con artists, learned of Barry's blissful existence and hated him for it, and now wants to travel back in time to kill Barry himself before Barry dies in *Crisis on Infinite Earths*. If we wanted a bad, clichéd soap opera plot, we'd watch "Days of Our Lives."

X-MEN WATCH

UP-TO-THE-MINUTE NEWS ON YOUR FAVORITE MUTANTS

- The artist order changeth! Current *X-Men* artist Alan Davis, originally scheduled only for a six-month penciling stint, will stay on as *X-Men* artist up to year 2000. Adam Kubert remains uncanny as ever as the ongoing artist on *Uncanny X-Men*.
- So what about Brandon Peterson, revealed last month as the new *X-Men* artist? He'll still be staying close. Brando is hip-deep in the current *Magneto Rex* mini-series, and is gearing up for another, still double-secret mini-series for this summer. Brando will also be pitching in on October's double-sized *Uncanny X-Men* #375, and lend a hand on occasions when the two core X-books go biweekly.
- It's crossover time again! May is slated to see a mutant crossover that leads into a whole new non-mutant line called Marvel Tech (see "Buzz Bin" this month) by June and July.
- The writing situation? Davis remains as plotter at least through March's *X-Men* #88 and *Uncanny X-Men* #368. Beyond that, nothing is firmed up. But with Davis locked and loaded for a long-term art gig–and at least three months of writing the books under his belt–he's looking like the current favorite to take the writing reins on an ongoing basis.

STUDENT SUSPENDED FOR CREATING COMIC

It seems as if your mother was right. Comics *can* get you in trouble.

Take the case of 15-year-old Jon Smith. The Kent, Wash., student was suspended from school for five days last March for drawing and circulating a self-produced comic book that took inspiration from real-life teachers and classmates. Titled *AlgebraMan*, it depicted his math teacher as a grim-'n'-gritty defender of equations, complete with razored forearms.

No problem there. His teacher encouraged him. "He knew about it," Smith said. "He thought it was cool."

What apparently wasn't cool to the faculty was Smith's depiction of a religious classmate he dubbed "GodBoy" in the comic. Though he says he got permission from everyone he parodied, another classmate took offense and alerted school authorities. Smith was sitting in English class when he was summoned to the principal's office. "A security guard came and took me down to the office," Smith recalled. "My principal said it was harassment."

Smith got a one week suspension from school, "punishment" for letting his creative juices flow. His parents didn't see cause for the school's reaction: "They supported me," Smith said. "They knew I wasn't trying to go after anybody." His friends had the same reaction: "They thought it was pretty bogus."

After the story made local newspapers, comic creators such as Erik Larsen and John Arcudi rallied to Smith's cause. "It's all pretty silly," *Gen*[13] writer Arcudi said. "The school overreacted, to say the least. He wasn't hurting anybody, didn't start a fight, didn't set off fireworks in school, didn't put a tack on the teacher's chair. They really lost all sense of proportion, to my mind."

As for Smith, he's avoiding any more trouble. Plans for a *SuspendedBoy* comic were scrapped. "The whole thing's past now," he said. But he hasn't let his school's reaction discourage him—the aspiring artist is now working on a portfolio to bring to conventions. ■ **JAKE ROSSEN**

SCHOOL RAZE Smith's comic landed him a week's suspension from school because it allegedly harassed another student.

ALEX ROSS, ARTIST 'SUPREME'

Alex Ross is letting the world know that *Supreme* is not dead yet. Not if he's got anything to say about it.

The acclaimed designer and painter of *Superman: Peace on Earth* has lent his redesign talents to Awesome Entertainment's titan, Supreme. The new look is slated to debut in Awesome's *Supreme: The Return*, a June launch rolling out a year's worth of unpublished Supreme stories by writer Alan Moore. And Ross did this job with the best of motives—he did it for love.

"I wouldn't have done this if Alan didn't do what he did," Ross said. "He took a Superman prototype character and did stories far beyond what we've seen in Superman books in years."

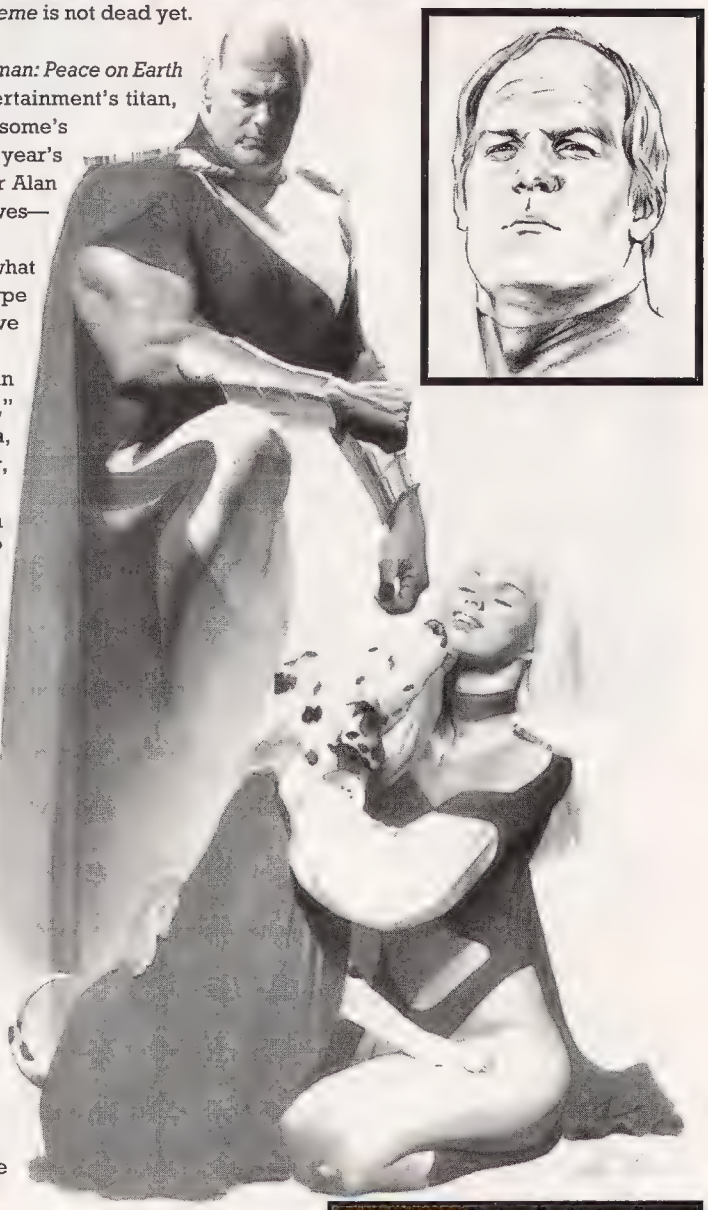
For the redesign, Ross had a uniform spirit in mind. "It's influenced by ceremonial military garb," the artist said. Supreme and his sister, Suprema, will have similar costumes. Beyond the military, Ross grabbed from all sorts of sources.

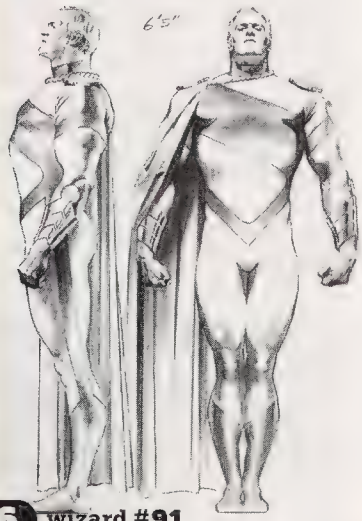
"The robe off the shoulder is vaguely Captain Marvel-ish," Ross admitted. The wristbands? Straight out of the Beatles. "Look at George Harrison's coat on the *Sgt. Pepper's* album cover," Ross said. "Cool design, and they look similar to a sergeant's stripes, adding to the military flair."

But the highlight of the new costumes? An "S"-shaped symbol that takes up the entire torso. "I even stole a little from my earlier design forms like [*Kingdom Come*'s] Superman and [*Astro City*'s] Samaritan," Ross said. "I combined a lot of essences and just went with my gut to try to live up to what Alan has done. In the end...it just feels kind of *right*."

As for Suprema? "I just wanted to make her more physically attractive. No one had illustrated her as a bombshell before. If you're falling off a building and you're going to get saved, you'd just as soon it was some va-va-voom kitty that's plucking you out of the air."

And Radar, the Hound Supreme? "Awesome wasn't expecting that one," Ross explained. "But I figured I might as well throw in the dog. Not that I like drawing dogs. I don't have much reference for them." ■ **MATTHEW BRADY**





REIGN SUPREME Thanks to Ross' designs, Supreme, his sister Suprema and Radar the dog draw inspiration from a little bit military, a little bit Capt. Marvel and a little bit rock 'n' roll.

VAMPIRELLA CREATOR SUES HARRIS COMICS

Vampirella recently kept villainess Mistress Nyx from opening a gateway between Hell and Earth. Now, Vampi's fighting a real battle in what many would consider Hell *on* Earth: the U.S. judicial system.

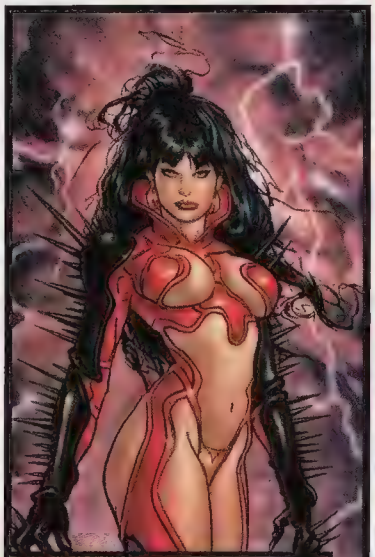
Vampirella creator James Warren has filed an $80 million lawsuit against Harris Publications Inc. and others for infringement of Warren's rights. Harris began using certain Warren creations, including Vampirella, after purchasing rights following the 1983 bankruptcy of Warren Communications Company.

"The property that was purchased were certain reprint rights," Warren said. "Harris has expanded way out of the realm of what they purported to buy."

Warren said he believes this expansion took place because he was not particularly high-profile. "There were literally rumors I was dead," he said.

Harris plans to fight the case in federal court.

"We believe Mr. Warren's allegations are without merit," David Bogart, editorial director of Harris Comics said. "We are, and have been for nearly 15 years, the exclusive owners of Vampirella and the other Warren publishing assets." ■ TRENT D. McNEELEY



LAWSUITING UP Vampirella creator James Warren wants to bleed $80 million outta Harris Comics for infringing his ownership rights.

'BATTLE' LINES DRAWN

They look like comic books. But they're not. So just what is a "Battlebook"anyway?

What: You'd have to be a complete nut case to pick a fight with Captain America. But what if you had the wall-crawling skills of Spider-Man? Or the speed and agility of Shi? *Battlebooks* lets you find out.

Why: Billy Tucci, the head of Crusade Entertainment and the creator of Shi, came up with the idea because "when people play *Tomb Raider,* they *are* Lara Croft. When they read a comic, they're just reading the book." Tucci hopes that by involving a reader in a character's actions, people can find renewed interest in comics.

Who: Battlebooks, Inc. has rights to characters from Marvel Comics and Crusade Comics, and has just expanded with Witchblade, The Darkness and Vampirella from Top Cow and Harris, respectively. And the company is pursuing many other licenses. "We want to give fans the chance to say, 'I can be Spider-Man and beat up Hollywood Hogan!'" Tucci said.

When: *Battlebooks* have been available in comics and gaming shops since November. The books cost $3.99 a pop.

The Deal: Each *Battlebooks* is filled with artwork and instructions depicting the possible actions and reactions of the character. It's a panel-by-panel, blow-by-blow fight, with players choosing the action. At the beginning of each game, players keep their enclosed "maneuver card" and exchange books in order to get the feel of facing the other person. Maneuvers are chosen, and the fight ends when one player's "Body Points" are brought down to zero.

With four new books each month, *Battlebooks* buyers are assured to always have something new to play with. The ease of gameplay makes *Battlebooks* accessible to anyone, and the appeal of jumping into your favorite superhero's tights should entice many comics fans. ■ NACHIE CASTRO

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LAST MAN STANDING

comic battles you never thought you'd see

NIGHTWING VS. GAMBIT

THE COMBATANTS

TALE OF THE TAPE

6'1"	HEIGHT	5' 10"
175 lbs.	WEIGHT	175 lbs.
73"	REACH	69"
New Orleans	HOMETOWN	Gotham
Mutant	"EX"	Alien
Former thief	DARK PAST	Wore short-pants

Orphaned when his acrobatic performer parents were murdered, Dick Grayson was taken in and raised by Bruce Wayne, the millionaire playboy who secretly fights crime as Batman. Trained to an almost superhuman level in espionage, detective skills and a host of fighting styles, Grayson teamed with Batman as the first Robin and, later, adopted the costumed identity of Nightwing.

Little is known of Remy LeBeau, the mutant born with the ability to charge inanimate objects with explosive force, which he can then throw at whatever target suits his fancy. A New Orleans native, LeBeau was at one time a member of the Thieves Guild and worked for the villainous Mr. Sinister, but has since seemingly reformed his ways and fights for justice as one of the uncanny X-Men.

tha winnah... As the two circle each other, Gambit makes the first move with his battle staff, which is blocked by Nightwing's baton and from there the battle is rapid-fire. Amid the hammering blows of their weapons, the lightning-fast kicks and enough trash talk to make Spider-Man proud, Nightwing shifts to pure offense believing he has Gambit's fighting style down. That's when the crafty Cajun—now knowing this is how his foe operates—pulls his trump card...literally. The former Boy Wonder suffers broken bones and shrapnel wounds as the X-Man presses his attack. Badly hurt and losing ground, Nightwing knows it's all or nothing and, using a gymnastic ability that even overshadows Batman's, evades Gambit's onslaught until he sees a split-second opening and WHA-BAM!, a jaw-shattering blow KOs the X-Man and leaves a bloody, broken and bruised Nightwing trying to figure out how to make all of those leftover playing cards explode.

this month's battle drawn by SCOTT McDANIEL and KARL STORY

IN THE WARTY HALLS OF THE THRONE ON THE PLANET OF THE TERRIBLE TOAD MEN--!
UNDERLING! HAVE YOU THE INFORMATION WE NEED TO RESUME OUR ASSAULT AGAINST PLANET EARTH?
THE LAST TIME WE TRIED TO INVADE, WE GOT OUR TOADY ASSES HANDED TO US BY THE INCREDIBLE HULK!
ACTUALLY, SIRE, IT WAS DR. BANNER WHO HANDED US OUR TOADY--
SILENCE!
I SEE THE HULK AS OUR ONLY OBSTACLE! WHAT IS HIS STATUS? I WANT--
A LITTLE HULK HISTORY
or~ Variations in GREEN & GRAY
BY BRIAN "GAMMA BOMB" AHERN

THE HULK HAS GONE THROUGH MANY CHANGES SINCE LAST WE SAW HIM, MASTER!
EVEN BEFORE WE ARRIVED ON EARTH, THE HULK WAS FIRST GRAY--NOT GREEN! *
AND WALKING LIKE HE HAD HIS LUNCH IN HIS PANTS.
* INCREDIBLE HULK #1--HIS VERY FIRST APPEARANCE!

BUT BY THE VERY NEXT DAY, HE HAD EVOLVED TO A BRIGHT, EMERALD GREEN! *
RAHR! GOOD! FOR A WHILE THERE, I COULD HARDLY SEE MYSELF IN THAT BLOTCHY COLOR! NO WONDER I HATE ALL MANKIND!
* INCREDIBLE HULK #2

NOT LONG AFTER, HULK DONNED SOME BIKINI TRUNKS AND BEGAN TALKING LIKE A THUG! *
BAH! I GOT THE BRAINS, SEE--
--AN' I DO ALL MY SHOPPIN' AT GOOGAM'S SWIMWEAR, YA PUNK!
* HULK #4

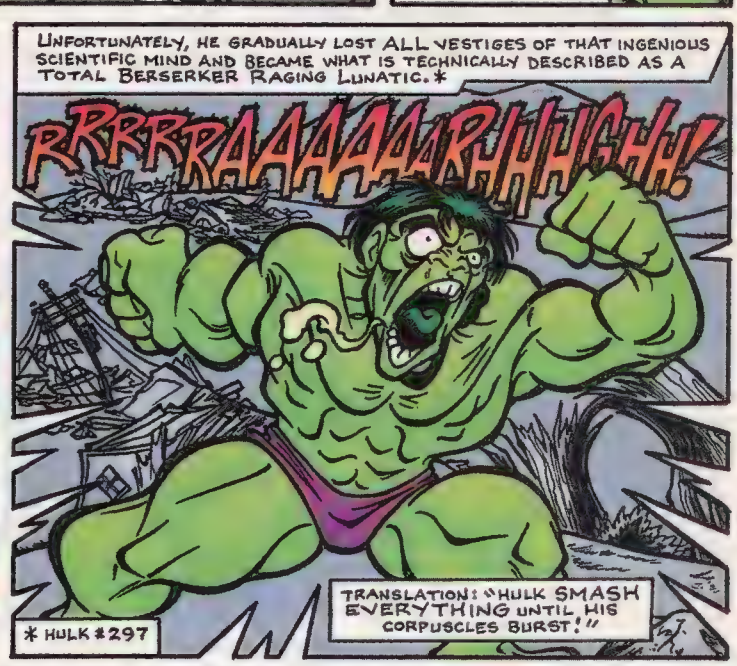
EVEN AS AN UNCOUTH RUFFIAN, THUG HULK HELPED FOUND A TEAM OF EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES--
AYE, VERILY! YON TEMPERAMENTAL ENGINE OF DESTRUCTION DOTH SPELL "HERO" TO US!
BUT HIS MEMBERSHIP DIDN'T LAST, AND THE HULK SOON REVERTED TO A SAVAGE, DESTRUCTIVE MONSTER -- COMPLETE WITH A CHARMING MOP-TOP FOR A WHILE. *
DON'T MOCK HULK'S HAIRDO!
* TALES TO ASTONISH #86

DURING THIS PERIOD, HULK DEVELOPED A PRONOUNCED BROW * AND HIS OFFICIAL WITTY CATCHPHRASE--
HULK SMASH!
ER... AS SOON AS HULK DISLODGES HIS CHEST FROM HULK'S PELVIS...
* TALES TO ASTONISH #90

SHORTLY THEREAFTER, THE HULK ACHIEVED HIS DEFINITIVE LOOK, AS WELL AS HIS PERSONAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE LAWS OF PHYSICS!
THE MADDER HULK GETS, THE STRONGER HE GETS!
TO SAY NOTHING OF HIS INCREASED SALIVA OUTPUT--OOF!

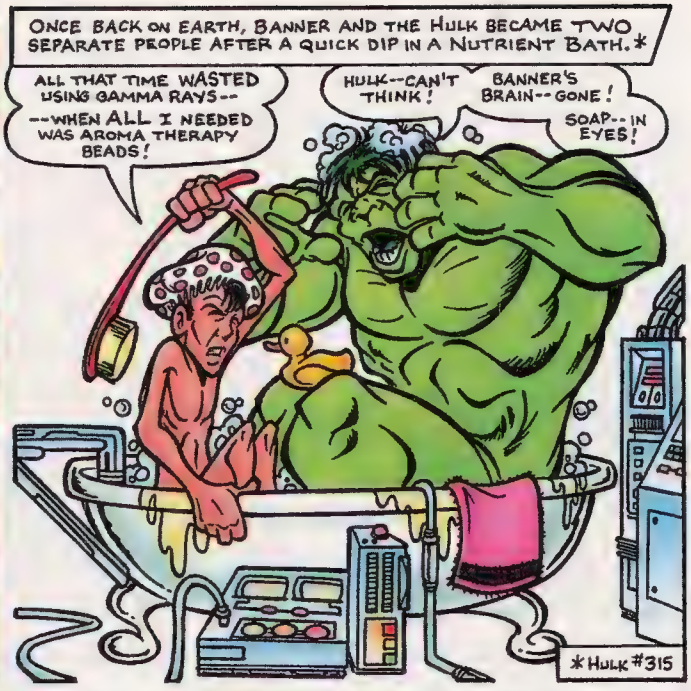
EVENTUALLY, THE BRILLIANT MIND OF BRUCE BANNER TOOK COMPLETE CONTROL OF THE BRUTE--*
RUNNING ABOUT WITHOUT A SHIRT ON?!
APPALLING!
-- EARNING HIM BOTH ACCOLADES AND ACCEPTANCE!**
YOU LIKE ME! YOU REALLY LIKE ME!!!
* HULK #272, ** 278

THE ONCE-MONSTROUS HULK BECAME A MAN OF SOPHISTICATION. *
YAS, THE SPLENDIFEROUS HULK SHALL CALCULATE ALL THE NECESSARY DATA--
-- WEIGH THE VARIOUS OPTIONS FOR OPTIMUM DESIRED RESULT--
-- THEN SMASH!
* HULK #285

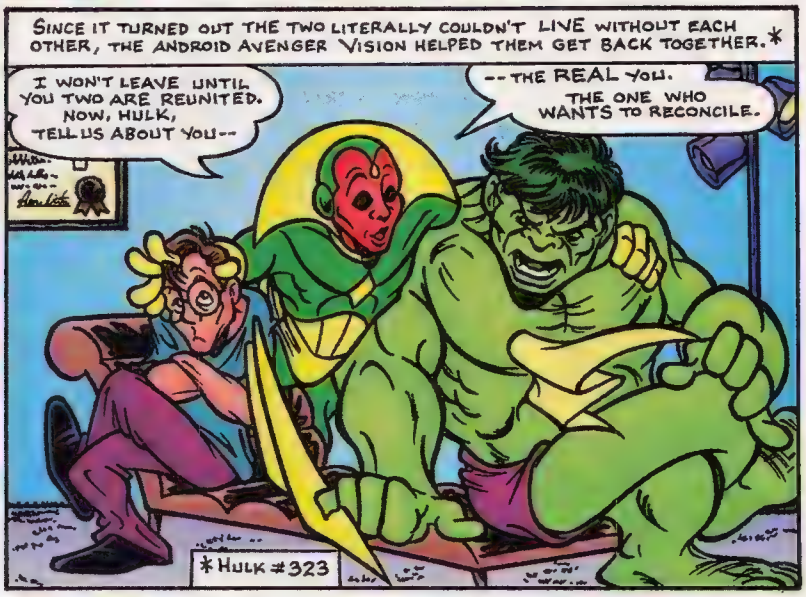

UNFORTUNATELY, HE GRADUALLY LOST ALL VESTIGES OF THAT INGENIOUS SCIENTIFIC MIND AND BECAME WHAT IS TECHNICALLY DESCRIBED AS A TOTAL BERSERKER RAGING LUNATIC. *
RRRRAAAAAARHHHGHH!
TRANSLATION: "HULK SMASH EVERYTHING UNTIL HIS CORPUSCLES BURST!"
* HULK #297

RATHER THAN HAVE THE ENTIRE WESTERN HEMISPHERE PAVED OVER AS A GIANT PARKING LOT IN THE WAKE OF INCALCULABLE DESTRUCTION, DOCTOR STRANGE SENT THE HULK TO A BIZARRE CROSSROADS DIMENSION IN HOPES THE ENRAGED GREENSKIN COULD FIND SOME OTHER WORLD TO INHABIT! *
A CHANGE CAN BE AS GOOD AS A REST, Y'KNOW! BUH-BYE!
THANK-YOU FOR FLYING AIR-INTERDIMENSIONAL! COFFEE?
* HULK #300

BUT THE HULK DID NOT STAY EXILED FOREVER. ALPHA FLIGHT FISHED HIM OUT (AFTER WHICH HE NEGLECTED TO THANK THEM).*
CATCH OF THE DAY SMASH!
GUESS THIS MEANS HE WON'T AGREE TO BEING STUFFED AND MOUNTED!
*ALPHA FLIGHT #28


ONCE BACK ON EARTH, BANNER AND THE HULK BECAME TWO SEPARATE PEOPLE AFTER A QUICK DIP IN A NUTRIENT BATH.*
ALL THAT TIME WASTED USING GAMMA RAYS--
--WHEN ALL I NEEDED WAS AROMA THERAPY BEADS!
HULK--CAN'T THINK!
BANNER'S BRAIN--GONE!
SOAP--IN EYES!
*HULK #315

AND LIKE A SCIENTIST IN AN OLD SCIENCE FICTION MOVIE, BANNER VOWED TO DESTROY THE MONSTER HE'D UNLEASHED!*
I WILL STOP GODZILL--ER, I MEAN, THE HULK!
*HULK #317


SINCE IT TURNED OUT THE TWO LITERALLY COULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT EACH OTHER, THE ANDROID AVENGER VISION HELPED THEM GET BACK TOGETHER.*
I WON'T LEAVE UNTIL YOU TWO ARE REUNITED. NOW, HULK, TELL US ABOUT YOU--
--THE REAL YOU. THE ONE WHO WANTS TO RECONCILE.
*HULK #323

THE UNEASY REUNION LED TO ANOTHER NUTRIENT BATH, MAKING THE WHOLE SITUATION APPEAR -- GRAY.*
FROM NOW ON, I ONLY TAKE SHOWERS!
THAT'S IT!
*HULK #324

PERHAPS HE THEN TOOK TOO MANY SHOWERS, FOR THE GRAY HULK EVOLVED TO A WRINKLY APPEARANCE. HE'D TRANSFORM EACH NIGHTFALL TO ALL NEW PROBLEMS--
I'M NOT AS STRONG AS I USED TO BE--!
SOMEONE GET ME A HERNIA BELT TO HELP ME LIFT THIS HUGE BROW!*
*HULK #330

THIS CRASS, BUT INTELLIGENT, GRAY HULK WAS ABLE TO APPLY HIS SUPERHUMAN ABILITIES IN LAS VEGAS--

YAH, I'VE GOT THE POWER--TO BE A FLUNKY FOR A MOBSTER!

WELL... I NEVER GOT CLOTHES LIKE THIS WHEN I WAS AN AVENGER!

HE GAVE UP HIS PROMISING CAREER AS MR. FIXIT TO ONCE AGAIN RUN AROUND IN TATTERED PANTS.

SO THE VEGAS DRY CLEANERS LOST ALL MY SHIRTS!

WHAT'RE YOU LOOKIN' AT?!

YOU CAN'T KEEP A GOOD HULK DOWN, OR SUBMERGED, THOUGH--AND THE GREEN RETURNED BY TEARING RIGHT THROUGH BANNER'S SKIN! *

UHH! THIS IS WHAT--AHRR--COMES OF NOT USING A--MOISTURIZER!

HULK SMASH PUNY BANNER??

* HULK #372

BUT THE THREE PERSONALITIES DID NOT RESIDE PEACEFULLY INSIDE ONE NOGGIN--

DESPICABLE BEASTS!

AHH, SHADDUP, YA QUACK!

HULK SMASH BOTH OF YOU!

SO ALL THREE MERGED TO FORM WHAT HAS BEEN CALLED THE GREATEST HULK! *

I'VE GOT THE BRAINS OF BRUCE BANNER--

--THE STRENGTH OF THE GREEN HULK--

--THE ATTITUDE OF THE GRAY HULK--

--AND THE CHIN OF DICK VAN DYKE!

* HULK #377

BUT THE FORM OF BRUCE BANNER WAS NOT GONE FOREVER!

IN A MOMENT OF EXTREME FURY, THE MERGED HULK REGRESSED INTO A RAGING 98-POUND WEAKLING! *

PUNY BANNER, SMASH!

OW! I BROKE A NAIL!

* HULK #425

BELIEVING HIMSELF TO BE THE NEAR-INDESTRUCTABLE HULK, RAGING PUNY BANNER EXPOSED HIMSELF TO THE FULL BRUNT OF AN EXPLODING GRENADE-- *

--WHICH LODGED SHRAPNEL INTO HIS BRAIN!

THE HULK THEN BECAME DESTRUCTIVE AND ERRATIC!

HE LACKED EMOTIONAL STABILITY--AND WAS SOON TO UNDERGO A STRANGE PHYSICAL TRANSFORMATION--HE WAS NOT AT ALL NORMAL!

THE DISTINCTION BEING WHAT, EXACTLY--?

* HULK #437

THEN EARTH'S HEROES FACED A TERRIBLE ONSLAUGHT, AND HULK WAS SPLIT INTO TWO DIFFERENT GREENSKIN GOLIATHS!

ONE REMAINED ON EARTH--

--THE OTHER HAD A BALL IN A POCKET UNIVERSE!

I'M PRETTY TORN ABOUT THIS!

NICE BEING YOU!

THE HULK REMAINING ON EARTH SET UP NEW RESIDENCE IN THE SAVAGE LAND-- AND A NEW LOOK WITH JUNGLE FACE PAINT.*

MAYBE HE'S BORN WITH IT.

MAYBE IT'S MAYBELLINE.

*HULK #454

A YEAR LATER, THE DIVIDED HULK, HAVING BEEN A POWER CHANNEL FOR TWO UNIVERSES FOR MONTHS--

--IS SLAMMED BACK TOGETHER INTO ONE ENTITY!*

REUNITED!

AND IT FEELS--SO BAD!

*HEROES RETURN #4

EVEN TODAY, THE HULK AND DR. BANNER CHANGE BACK AND FORTH AS PART OF AN ONGOING PSYCHOLOGICAL BATTLE BETWEEN THE TWO PSYCHES.

MY MOVE.

NO, NO, YA LAMEBRAIN! YA WANNA GIVE ME A CHECKMATE?!

WE PREDICT HIS NEXT TRANSFORMATION TO BE--

STOP!

THE HULK IS TOO DANGEROUS NO MATTER WHAT FORM HE TAKES! I DECREE THE INVASION POSTPONED UNTIL THE INCREDIBLE HULK IS LONG GONE!

ONE HUNDRED YEARS LATER--

AT LAST!

WE HAVE LANDED, AND THE EARTH IS OURS!

OUR INVASION WILL DEMONSTRATE THAT WE ARE STRONGER THAN ANYONE!

EXCUSE ME, TOADIES, BUT MAY I CLARIFY PRECISELY WHO IS THE STRONGEST ONE THERE IS?

ULP!

I-IS THIS THE END?

SOMEHOW, I SUSPECT IT'LL NEVER BE THE END!

TO FOLLOW THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE OF THE GREEN GOLIATH, GET IN ON THE GROUND FLOOR WITH THE ALL-NEW *HULK* #1, RELAUNCHING IN FEBRUARY!

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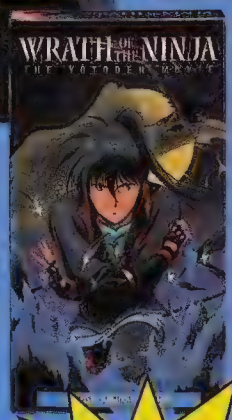

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DEAD RISING Before conquering the comics world in March, Undertaker crucifies Stone Cold Steve Austin before a live crowd.

NTROLLED CHAOS

AFTER LAYING WASTE TO THE WWF, CAN THE UNDERTAKER PUT A STRANGLEHOLD ON THE COMICS WORLD?

By Jim McLauchlin • Photos by Paul Schiraldi

"Stone Cold" Steve Austin doesn't look so tough right now.

The bald, take-no-crap Texan's strapped to a giant crucifix adorned with an Undertaker symbol, helplessly dangling from the rafters. Unable to move, Austin can only glare at the man who put him there.

That man? Try 7 feet worth of tattooed mayhem and self-proclaimed "minister of darkness" called The Undertaker. The 'Taker stands proud and calm, gazing into the crowd with glassy eyes as his manager/henchman—a 300-pound butterball called Paul Bearer—cackles with an evil glee that cracks the eardrums.

Sounds like something right out of a comic book? Well, it's not. It's the World Wrestling Federation and it's the closest thing to a real-life comic book drama in this world. So it's appropriate that the world of comics and wrestling collide this March when Chaos! Comics, publisher of *Evil Ernie* and *Lady Death*, launches *Undertaker*, a new ongoing series to chronicle the hellish adventures of wrestling's favorite undead son. An unusual combination? Not hardly.

Take a look at the similarities: Good guys vs. bad guys. Team-ups, loyalty and betrayal. Masks. Costumes. Combat. Heroes adored by the public, villains who are feared. And fans who are rabid for the stuff. "There's this whole audience that mainstream entertainment misses," says Chaos! Publisher Brian Pulido, who inked his company's Undertaker deal. "Hard-working blue-collar folk. Rock 'n' roll folk. They don't want Disney. They want ass-kicking, and no apologies."

Tonight, I'm one of those folk invading Connecticut's New Haven Coliseum. But my mission isn't the same as the 9,000 other fans. While they're here to cheer "Stone Cold" or the Undertaker on to victory, I'm here to figure out why wrestling has such a stranglehold on its fans and why comics is its perfect tag-team partner.

My investigation starts with Kira Varszegi and Jeff Colucci. The 20-something girlfriend-boyfriend team comes to WWF matches together all the time. They drive up to three hours, and think nothing of it.

"Wanna see a *real* fan?" Colucci asks with a swell of pride in his voice. "Show him, honey." She turns her back to me and lifts her hair to display a WWF logo tattooed at the base of her neck.

And that ain't all. They've got tons of memorabilia, including "vanity plates that spell out 'WWF GIRL,'" Varszegi chirps.

And if there was an Undertaker comic? "I don't read comics. But if the Undertaker is in one? I'm sure we'll snatch it up," Colucci says excitedly. "Without a doubt."

And it doesn't matter to Varszegi if the Undertaker isn't about truth, justice and the American way like Superman. "I like the Undertaker a lot more now than I did a year ago," she says. "He's even more evil now. And evil is so much cooler than good."

IN THE FLESH What's more out of place in these two photos: Jim's face or his 1980s rugby shirt?

Suddenly, the house lights go down and the crowd leaps to its feet. Spotlights darting through the stands whip the crowd into a frenzy. My pulse rate doubles as fans all around cheer and exchange high-fives. Two even head-butt each other. And fans whip out the homemade sign they brought. "I'm Ready to Meet My 'Taker!" screams one sign thrust skyward by an Undertaker fan. "Austin 3:16: Stone Cold just kicked your ass!" proclaims one of the hundreds of Austin signs. Fans jockey for position—sometimes even crawling on the floor—to outmaneuver each other with their signs as USA Network's cameras pan the crowd for use on the taped "Sunday Night Heat" and "Monday Night Raw" shows.

The night starts with a bang as fireworks and flames shoot straight up from the ring to the rafters. The WWF blows a *minimum* of $15,000 worth of pyrotechnics per event, and even 13 rows up in Section 14, I still feel the heat. I'd swear my eyebrows just singed. Varszegi and Colucci? They jump up and down, embracing, having the time of their lives.

As the first bout begins, I weave my way backstage to the locker rooms, which look more like holding cells for circus freaks. Ken Shamrock, a sadistic muscleman the WWF dubs "the World's Most Dangerous Man," punches himself in the chest to psyche himself up for a match. Luna Vachon, niece of wrestling legend Mad Dog Vachon, lays on a mat in a room where a trainer *walks* on her back to get the kinks out.

And manager Bearer's back is also in tough shape. He got stuffed down a manhole by Stone Cold last night in Baltimore and today he can barely stand upright. He mutters to himself about revenge.

Nearby, the Undertaker stretches out for his match, looking pale, overly tattooed, sweaty, and downright scary—in other words, just perfect. So why the interest in a comic in the first place? "I'm a minister of evil," he says plainly, in a distant voice. "Some people have comics as their only way to relate with the world. Any medium I can use to spread my word of darkness, I'll use."

And once spread, the public can draw its own conclusions. "Am I a superhero?" the Undertaker asks, staring at the ceiling and repeating the question. "I imagine to some. To others, I'm sure I'm a supervillain. One man's good is another man's evil. I leave it to the masses to decide."

But one thing the Undertaker will decide himself is his likeness in the comic. "I have a lot of tattoos," Undertaker says, touching his arms and fondling his tattoos. "I'm sure the artists will do me justice if they know what's good for them." Then, with a glare: "They can be replaced."

And the Undertaker knows he's the perfect fit for comics, above and beyond any other wrestler. "The Undertaker has mystique," he grunts. "People are intrigued by the Undertaker. They want to know about the Undertaker, and what they don't know,

they've had to conjure up in their own minds. This comic will be true-to-life. It will let the public know."

The Undertaker presses an icepack to his forehead to reduce the swelling from a previous shovel blow (No kidding!) and tells me to leave. Not being one to argue with 7-foot possible-zombie wrestlers, I oblige him.

In the hallway, the circus continues. The Rock, the WWF's trash-talking, 26-year-old champion, yammers a mile a minute about how tough he is to anyone who'll listen, flailing elbows through the air the whole time. And he knows what I'm writing. "The Rock's comic would be best!" he shouts. "The Undertaker? So what? There's only so much of that 'dark side' stuff that you can stand. Big deal. Die, already. Rest in peace."

My attention is sucked back down the tunnel, where the audience members explode riotously as the wrestling group D-Generation X reunites. It looked like DGX members Road Dog Jesse James and Bad-Ass Billy Gunn had gone over to Chairman Vince McMahon's evil, corporate side of the WWF. But the tag-team champs just *played* corporate so they could get the drop on some corporate stooges and kick their asses in the ring. The crowd is frenzied, screaming itself raw, as the Dog and Bad-Ass tear off their suits to reveal DGX T-shirts. Fireworks blast and fans point and laugh at pretty-boy WWF Commissioner Shawn Michaels ("The Heartbreak Kid"), as he stands by, watching meekly.

The floor transforms into a wild, shifting mosh pit as fans rush the barricades to get closer to DGX as the members stride back toward the locker room. Still, Michaels gets his sympathy. "Shawn, I want you!" one 16-year-old girl screams, tears almost welling up in her eyes as she tries to touch him. It makes me think I might have taken up the wrong line of work.

The main event? It's Undertaker vs. Austin. The intro alone takes 20 minutes, as video clips detail the rivalry. When Undertaker absorbed that shovel to the head? Austin was doing the swinging. Goth heavy metal reverberates through the arena as the Undertaker solemnly enters the ring. Austin flies out of the locker room and runs full-board into the ring. The match is everything anyone could ask for. A wild melee breaks out, and after the chairs, metal ring stairs and microphone cords are used, the Undertaker finally cold-cocks Austin with the ring bell—from here to that giant metal "UT" Undertaker symbol.

The crucifixion is the ultimate in grandstand play, and the fans love it. It's all part of the buildup to a battle of even more preposterous proportions—a pay-per-view event where to win, a wrestler must bury his opponent alive. The WWF gladly provides the hole. And dirt.

If Austin wins, who knows? Maybe there'll be a *Stone Cold* comic from Chaos!? It seems the consensus choice on the floor. "We know fans are screaming for one," Pulido says. "It would be fantastic to do. But it's too soon to tell."

Meanwhile, up in Section 14, Row 13, Jeff Colucci waits for the day. "*Stone Cold* comics would kick ass!" he says. "I'd pay whatever price it takes." Even if it's just a comic book story?

"Look, We know its not 'real,' but we don't care," his girlfriend Kira says. "It doesn't matter at all. We're here to be entertained. We're *here* for the story."

And the WWF gives 'em the wildest story you'll find. Even if it has to crucify someone to do it.

Wizard Senior Staff Writer Jim McLauchlin is pretty sure he could out-wrestle Wonder Woman, but only if he gets to start on top.

BAKE SALE Jim and some friends bask in the manly smell of The Rock's cuisine.

UNDERTAKER COMICS GO TO HELL AND BACK

Beau Smith knows the ring. He boxed Golden Gloves for six years and fought in "tough man" competitions in West Virginia bars when he was in college. Turned out to be good training. "Guess I got tough-guy status," Smith says. "They need fights? They come to me."

Smith, who wrote tough guys in *Black Terror* and *Guy Gardner: Warrior*, hones his skills writing Chaos! Comics' *Undertaker* series set to debut in March. Smith will take the Undertaker into the ring...and into Hell.

"The WWF wants us to flesh the Undertaker out," Smith says. "They don't want to use wrestling continuity because that changes too fast."

The setup of *Undertaker*? A three-way battle for control of Hell. The Undertaker is the warden of Stygian, Hell's prison and a place filled with what Smith calls, "the baddest of badass souls. They're the guys who went to Hell and said, 'Hmmm. I like it here!'"

The problem lies in a new character called the Embalmer, an ancient druid sorcerer, who busts the prison open and liberates a number of inmates using one of three *Books of the Dead*. The Undertaker also controls a Book. The third? It's held by the man who's *usually* the Undertaker's loyal manager and handler, Paul Bearer.

But in this version, Paul Bearer's a sadistic late-1800s prison doctor. "He'd do bizarre experiments on prisoners, and even got into animating dead bodies," according to Smith. The three war with each other to control all three *Books of the Dead*. 'Cause whoever holds them all controls Hell, and can use that control to dominate Earth. Their field of battle? The wrestling ring. "We just see their bouts as wrestling matches," Smith says. "But by winning, they get more souls for their army. The ring becomes the battleground for control of Hell."

Smith is pumped for the series because *he's* a WWF fan, too. "They don't just push the envelope in entertainment," Smith said. "They push, curl and twist the envelope. Then they set it on fire. Wrestling is as close to real, 3-D superheroes as you're going to find right now."

And working with the WWF? Smith says it's a breeze. After scripting the first three issues, the league only requested minor changes. "They wanted to make it more violent," Smith says. "I can live with that." ■ **JM**

AS LUK WOULD

'WIZARD' PICKS THE ULTIMATE DREAM TEAMS FOR STAR WARS COMIC BOOKS

BY THE WIZARD STAFF

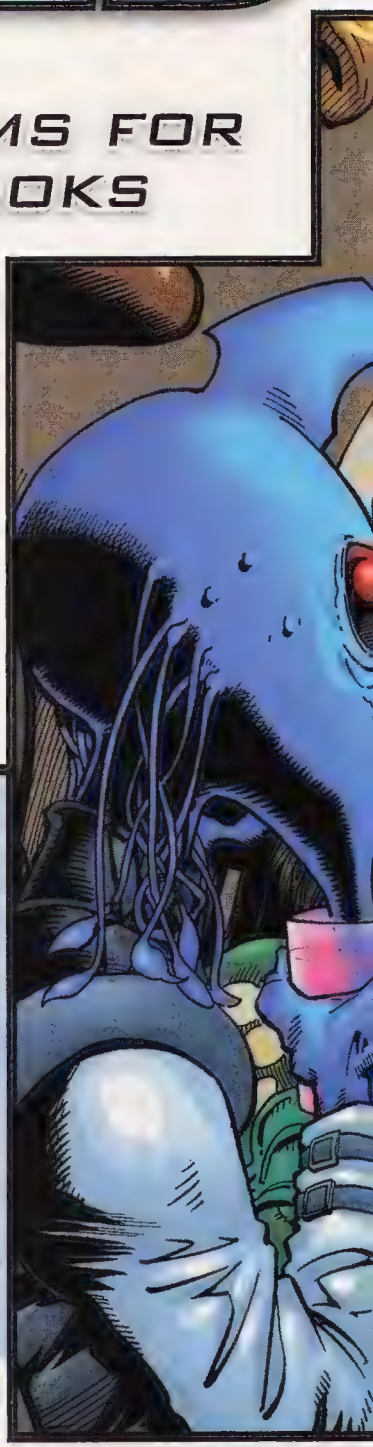
"What do you think?" asks George Lucas, motioning to you from behind his big, black desk. "What should I do with these Star Wars comic books?"

What, indeed? Yeah, this is a daydream many a fanboy has had, formulating his own "perfect" Star Wars comic with the "greatest" writer and artist working on it. And with the first new prequel movie on its way in May, we here at *Wizard* are no exception.

It's no secret that Star Wars hysteria is at an all-time high and the comics world is taking notice. Dark Horse Comics, the current publisher of comics based on Lucas' billion-dollar franchise, jumped into the excitement with an all-new *Star Wars* ongoing in December.

But why stop there?

We put our feverish fanboy noggins together and came up with four of our own streamlined, Star Wars-related comics just for the heck of it. So, in an ode to the perfect marriage between Lucas' vision and comics, here's our ultimate Star Wars wish list....



TALES OF MOS EISLEY

WRITER: John Arcudi

ARTIST: Barry Kitson

PREMISE: Think "Cheers," but a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away. Set in the seedy Mos Eisley cantina on the planet Tatooine, this series tells the sordid tales of the bar's cast of losers and transients, who recount them to the bartender or each other. Its stars would include the cantina's "regulars": Ponda Bobba, his partner Dr. Evazan, Momar Nadon, Muftak, the cantina band and other deviant aliens.

But remember: Droids stay outside.

WHY ARCUDI: Want humor with absurd alien action? Arcudi's your man. His comedic range thrived in DC's *Major Bummer* series, with the most wacko alien scenarios you'd ever see in a comic. How 'bout action? Arcudi's *Gen*[13] for WildStorm stirred up action faster than a TIE Fighter.

WHY KITSON: If "Star Wars" reinvented the space alien, then Kitson took the ball and ran with it on DC's *L.E.G.I.O.N.* from 1989-93. His alien designs would run the gamut from humanoid (think Greedo), to fantastically grotesque (Hammerhead), to ludicrously humorous (that fat dancer chick from Jabba's Palace)—precisely why Kitson's the main man to draw a book with Mos Eisley's intergalactic cast.

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E HAVE IT

'CHEERS' IN SPACE Kitson's eye for wacko aliens makes him the man to draw *Mos Eisley*, set in the cantina.

STAR WARS ADVENTURES

WRITER: Paul Dini

ARTIST: Rick Burchett

PREMISE: It's "Star Wars," Saturday-morning style. Drawn in a style similar to Warner Bros.' "Batman" and "Superman" animated series, this book takes place right after the events of "Star Wars." It focuses on Luke Skywalker and the Rebellion attempting to overthrow the evil Empire in a fun, high-octane, adventure style capturing the spirit of the first movie. Strong subplots focus on Han and Leia's snappy banter masking their true feelings (we won't play up the Luke/Leia/Han love triangle because, well, you know), Vader's quest to capture Luke, and bounty hunters constantly on Han Solo's tail.

WHY DINI: Dini's the guy who helped originate the WB animated style in the first place. A creator of the "Batman," "Superman" and "Batman Beyond" cartoons, Dini brings the perfect package. His cartoon and comics work smacks of smart writing which doesn't go over younger fans' heads withot insulting older ones. If you've watched "Batman" or read *Batman: Mad Love*, you'll know Dini has a knack for tragic characters like Darth Vader (Harley Quinn is seduced to evil by the Joker), scrappy females like Leia (Catwoman's tough-girl act ain't a far cry from the princess), fearless rogues like Han (hotshot Nightwing), and heroes-in-training like Luke (Robin).

WHY BURCHETT: When DC does an animated-style comic, it turns to Burchett every time. Who are we to argue? His style not only has the "look" down pat, but manages to do the toughest part: mimic the fast-paced dynamics of the cartoon. When it comes to doing this on a monthly basis, Burchett's our one–and–only choice.

'TOON IN Burchett's cartoony "look" would suit *Adventures* just fine.

HOT PURSUIT Maleev's style oozes grittiness for *Bounty Hunters*' shady stars.

BOUNTY HUNTERS

WRITER: Garth Ennis

ARTIST: Alex Maleev

PREMISE: What does it take to be the best? Ask Bannor Kale. He's a hotshot, rookie bounty hunter on a quest to be #1. Only thing is, a whole slew of mercenaries stand in his path, namely Boba Fett, IG-88, Bossk, Dengar, Zuckuss and many more. In his climb to the top, he'll butt heads with all these familiar faces and some new ones, playing all the angles—including jobs with the Empire, the Rebellion and the factions that want nothing to do with either side.

WHY ENNIS: With the "Pulp Fiction"-style pen of Garth Ennis, this is most definitely not your father's Star Wars. Hard-core, fast-paced and *definitely* for the mature reader, this *Preacher* and *Hitman* writer would take this series into the dirty, not-so-nice corners of the Star Wars universe.

WHY MALEEV: This guy is *used* to drawing the not-so-nice corners. Heck, this Bulgarian native once *lived* in a not-so-nice corner of the world. And his realistically gritty portrayal of an earthquake-ravaged Gotham City and a battered Batman in the opening salvo to DC's current "No Man's Land" story makes him the ultimate candidate for bringing to life Star Wars' shady characters. Even better, this guy is a film storyboarding vet, so he'd have an easy time translating movie characters to the comic page.

DARK EMPIRE

WRITER: Warren Ellis
ARTIST: John Cassaday
PREMISE: Call it "Episode VI and a Half." After the fall of the Empire in "Return of the Jedi," there are a few remaining grand admirals who, with their rogue fleets, fight each other for control of an Imperial army in disarray. And making matters worse is the Clone Emperor who cheated death in "Jedi," pulling all the strings from behind the scenes. The only thing to keep the peace is the fledgling New Republic, led by Luke Skywalker and Leia Organa, in a fragile state of rebuilding the galaxy. Now the siblings and their new army of Jedis must stop them all from destroying everything they've fought to protect.
WHY ENNIS: Want big, fate-of-humanity, political action-adventure? Ellis perfected it with WildStorm's *StormWatch*. Whether it be evil puppetmasters sending troops to slaughter for their own gain (like *StormWatch*'s Henry Bendix), grizzled soldiers preserving the peace they'd die for (*SW*'s Winter—and guess what? He died doing just that.), or leaders making decisions that haunt them the rest of their lives (*SW*'s Jackson King), Ellis can do the job with *Dark Empire*. Another part of Ellis' appeal is his knack for finding interesting ways to abuse and kill characters (see any issue of *StormWatch*—no lie).

It all comes down to this: Ellis would feel mighty cozy in the post-"Jedi" universe. That, and he'd find the most entertaining ways to waste Ewoks.
WHY CASSADAY: George Lucas would love this guy. Cassaday's style suits Lucas' vision to a T: clean and dirty at the same time, just like the sleek design work in the movies with sanitized space stations and singed starcrafts.

Cassaday's style on Image's *Desperadoes*, Marvel's *Union Jack* and DC's *Authority* all point towards that galaxy far, far away. Cassaday will design sterile, high-tech machinery and weaponry...and, if appropriate, he'll grime it all up by splattering ink spots for that dingy effect. And like Star Wars, his heroes in *Desperadoes* and *Union Jack* are bold, yet rugged; his villains run from cold and calculated in *Planetary*, to horrifyingly heinous in *Desperadoes*.

Even better, Cassaday and Ellis prove to be a formidable team, working their magic on *Planetary* every month.

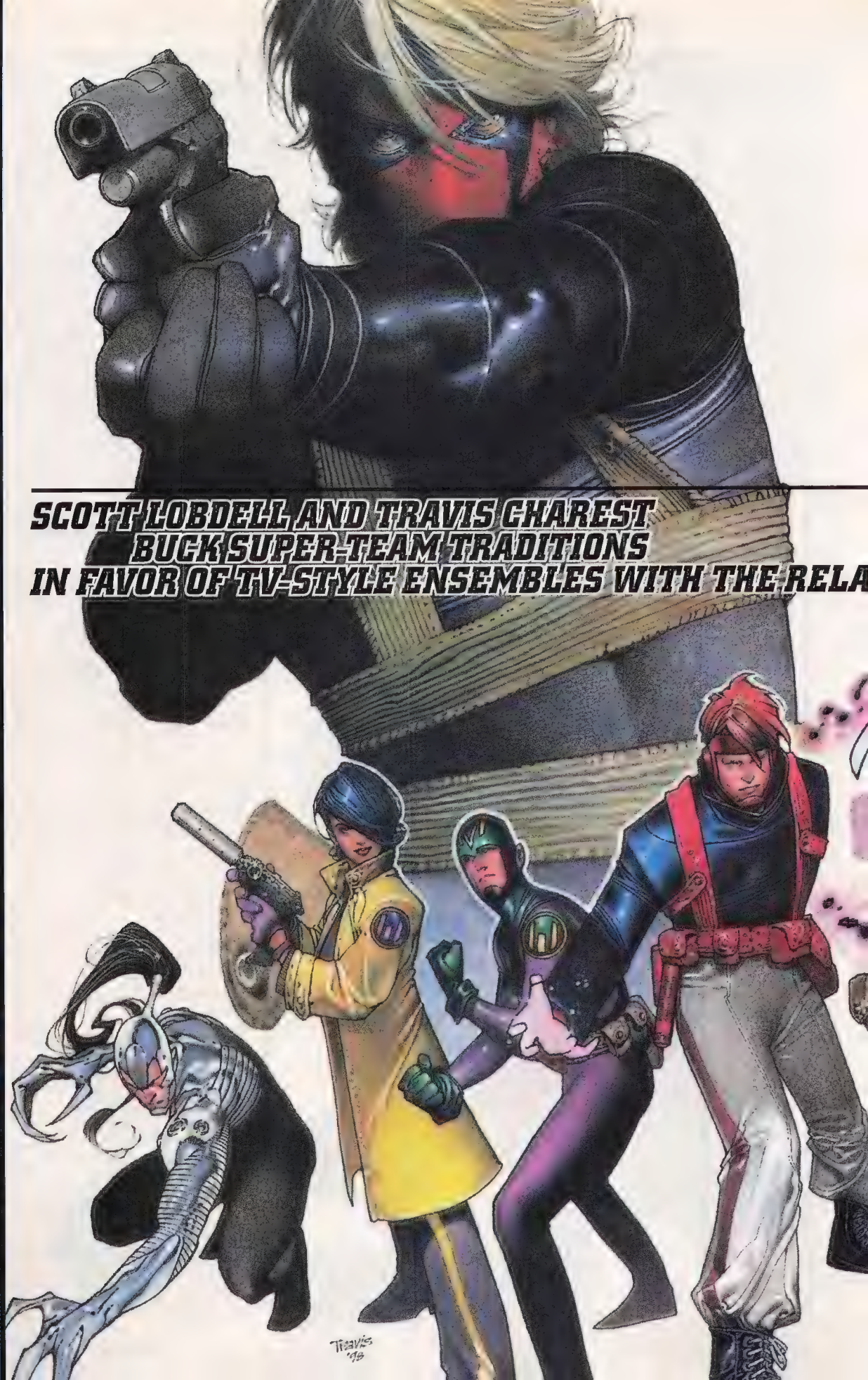
BY GEORGE! For *Dark Empire*, Cassaday's "clean and dirty" style would perfectly imitate the look of the film's design work.

The Wizard *Staff wants to see all these great comics, but in the meantime will read* Star Wars—The Manga, *the best Star Wars comic...EVER!*

DARK FARCES

THE STAR WARS COMICS THAT SHOULD NEVER, EVER—EVEN IF YOU COULD GET ALEX ROSS TO DO THE COVERS—BE MADE

10) Sandpeople Mystery Theater
9) Dengar Girl
8) Jade & Silent Boba
7) Ka-Zar in the Savage Lando
6) Han Solo Avengers
5) Captain America & The Millennium Falcon
4) The Uncanny X-Wings
3) Justice League Endor
2) Darth & The Invaders
1) Magnus, Lobot Fighter



SCOTT LOBDELL AND TRAVIS CHAREST BUCK SUPER-TEAM TRADITIONS IN FAVOR OF TV-STYLE ENSEMBLES WITH THE RELA

WILD THINGS

NCH OF 'WILDCATS'

BY D.B. NICHOLLS AND CHRIS RYAN

CAT WALK Meet the "new" Wildcats (from left): Warblade is MIA, Voodoo's quit the biz, Maul stays skinny, Spartan deals arms and Zealot's rumored to be dead. Grifter (in background) is a mercenary.

DON'T COMPARE THE NEWLY RELAUNCHED WILDCATS to comics greatest super-teams such as the X-Men, JLA or Avengers. In fact, don't even call them a team.

"People should try to get the idea of a team book out of their heads," writer Scott Lobdell of DC Comics' new *Wildcats* series says, "and try to wrap themselves around the idea that it's a story about people who have had a shared experience. Like [the TV show] 'NYPD Blue.'

"It may be the first time that we've seen a team book that's not a team book. It's a format that's been really, really strong in television for years and there's no reason that we can't introduce it to comics."

That introduction will take place in early January when *Wildcats*—the book that superstar artist Jim Lee created in 1992 when he helped form Image Comics—will be relaunched by DC's WildStorm imprint. Joining ex-X-Men writer Lobdell is artist Travis Charest, one of the most talented pencilers in the field. To accommodate Charest's attention to detail, the book is being released bimonthly, which is unusual among mainstream comics.

Lobdell has set out to make *Wildcats* unusually good. Drawing inspiration from TV ensemble shows such as "ER" and the aforementioned "NYPD Blue," the writer wants to focus on a group of individuals and how they interact. But this bunch of characters *won't* be sitting around in a hospital or precinct house. "It'll be very action-oriented," says Lobdell. "More like a 'Die Hard,' 'Lethal Weapon,' or even 'Braveheart' movie."

"Hopefully we'll get across to the readers that this stuff could really be happening," adds Charest.

AS FOR WHAT REALLY WILL BE GOING ON, *Wildcats* #1 picks up one year after the original 'Cats—Spartan, Grifter, Zealot, Maul, Warblade, Void, Voodoo and Lord Emp—disbanded after the events of last summer's *WildC.A.T.s* #50. One of them, Lobdell says, is dead (he ain't saying who) and now the rest of these half-human/half-alien hybrids (except for Grifter, who's all human) have their own agenda, with individual stories pulling them back towards each other.

The stories themselves are a stark contrast to that of the flashier *JLA* or *Avengers*. The Wildcats will be much less public than ever before, with no ties to the government, or any one power source, not even their billionaire financier Emp. No other WildStorm characters are planned as guest stars. No interaction with the rest of the WildStorm continuity is slated. "Remember, they're *covert*," Charest says.

So, instead of intergalactic battles with evil alien Daemonites, these Wildcats will go up against organized crime figures on an international basis. Story locations will include Venice, Miami, Vienna and Ireland.

Even the title itself has changed. Gone is the abbreviation "*C.A.T.s*" (standing for "Covert Action Teams"). Both Charest and Lobdell found it absurd that an undercover team would call itself a "Covert Action Team." The tag had to go if they were going to succeed in creating a more believable book.

Also absent is creator Lee, whose star power drove the original *WildC.A.T.s* series to the top of the sales charts for its first two years.

Unlike how Lee began the original series, Lobdell and Charest will be handling the character interaction much differently. "We really want to make sure we get to know who these characters are before we have them interacting eight or 10 at a time," Lobdell says.

READERS GET TO KNOW GRIFTER FIRST. The star of *Wildcats* #1, the team's roguish gunsmith has returned to his soldier-for-hire roots. "Grifter, who has made a life for himself over the past six months," Lobdell says. "He is in the middle of a job that he's taken to pay the bills and inadvertently finds himself pulled back into Lord Emp's grip."

His trademark VAD PP30 energy blasters are gone now that he's not drawing a steady paycheck; he now uses conventional firearms with realistically limited bullet clips. Gone are the days of Grifter rushing in to face 20 armed gunmen, Charest says, adding, "He's much more stealthy now."

The android Spartan appears to be an arms dealer at the start of issue one. But the former 'Cats leader is actually doing considerable undercover work, some of it less glamorous than we're used to seeing him do, according to Charest. In fact, Spartan has changed far less than any of his colleagues, remaining the ultimate boy scout; the only change is that his computer consciousness has been downloaded into a far more powerful and durable body than any of his earlier incarnations.

"You'll no longer see the stories where he takes a gut shot and is bleeding white juice all over the place," *Wildcats* editor Scott Dunbier adds. "He's going to be a lot sturdier than previously."

Not so solid is Lord Emp, who is losing his grasp on humanity striving to become a "High Lord of Eternal Light," according to Lobdell. The manipulative dwarf financier of the original team undergoes the biggest change of anybody in all of WildStorm history, Dunbier says.

The story behind what happened to the metal-clawed Warblade is being kept a complete secret. "The Wildcats will discover the answer to that around issue #8," Lobdell says. "And boy, will they be surprised."

Fans might also be thrown for a loop with the new look of Maul, whose powers let him enlarge into a behemoth at the cost of his intelligence. "He has made a decision not to enlarge himself because he's discovered a better use of his powers, which will again shock and dismay readers," Lobdell teases. "When we first see him, we barely recognize him."

OLD vs. NEW

GRIFTER

THEN: *Made a steady paycheck as a Halo, Inc. employee and had VAD energy pistols that never ran out of ammo.*

NOW: *Makes an unsteady paycheck as a mercenary and uses traditional firearms that frequently run out of ammo.*

SPARTAN

THEN: *Android leader of the WildC.A.T.s whose body often took mega-damage.*

NOW: *Android arms dealer whose new durable body dishes out mega-damage.*

VOODOO

THEN: *An exotic dancer who had little control over her evil half-Daemonite side. She shacked up with Spartan.*

NOW: *A former exotic dancer who has stronger control over her evil alien Daemonite side. She is shacking up with another Wildcat.*

MAUL

THEN: *He enlarged himself to gain super-strength at the cost of his intelligence.*

NOW: *He chooses to no longer enlarge himself, discovering it's more intelligent to use his powers in a different way.*

ZEALOT

THEN: *A Coda warrior woman who often slept with Grifter.*

NOW: *Unknown. It's rumored among fandom that she's sleeping with the fishes.*

WARBLADE

THEN: *He was the hothead of the group and had the ability to convert his appendages to weapons of all types.*

NOW: *Unknown. Maybe he's got a gig in "Edward Scissorhands 2" or something.*

LORD EMP

THEN: *Billionaire financier of the WildC.A.T.s and owner of Halo, Inc. He sought to decisively end the team's war against the Daemonites.*

NOW: *Billionaire financier, owner of Halo, Inc., and seeking to decisively become a "High Lord of Eternal Light."*

MUST-READ TV Lobdell calls the new Wildcats an "anti-team book," basing it on TV ensemble shows such as "NYPD Blue" and "ER."

The same goes for the hypnotic Voodoo, who seems to have her life together. No longer an exotic dancer, she has what she believes is a tremendous amount of control over her alien Daemonite nature, and is also sharing her life with the "most unexpected" member of Wildcats.

For all we know, that member could be Zealot, the Wildcats' warrior woman, whose status is being kept under lock and key. The only thing Lobdell divulges is that "all of issues #4 and #5 are completely about her. They're almost Zealot spotlight issues."

Rumor has it that Zealot is the deceased member because she is one of the only characters to not appear in any advertisements or preview sketches for the relaunch. Lobdell dodges the question saying, "I would say that for a woman who's been around for about 2000 years, if that rumor is indeed true, it's probably not the first time and probably won't be the last."

Very much alive is Void, the team's teleporter, who will be seen in DC/WildStorm's *Divine Right:The Adventures of Max Faraday* and in *Wildcats*. "She's gonna be more active than she was in the first 50 issues of *WildC.A.T.s*," says Lobdell. "She actually appears in almost every issue [of the new *Wildcats*], we just don't know she's there. Void also plays a pretty deep part in the ultimate story of *Divine Right*."

As for villains, all but one from the original run are gone, the sole survivor being Kenyan, who appeared in the only previous Lobdell/Charest collaboration *WildC.A.T.s/X-Men: The Golden Age*. Lobdell describes Kenyan as the *Wildcats*' closest equivalent to Doctor Doom or Magneto.

Gone are the old standbys such as the shady political organization International Operations (I.O.) and the obsessed villain Pike (who's vowed to kill a 'Cat), according to Lobdell.

BUT Kenyan isn't the only obstacle these new Wildcats must face. Conspicuously missing from this relaunch is Jim Lee, the man most fans connect to the super-team. "As time went on," Lee says, "I realized I can only work on so much stuff at one time. It was fun to create the WildC.A.T.s, but it's fun for me to create new stuff, too. So I move on."

Lee, who has collaborated with Lobdell before on *X-Men/WildC.A.T.s: The Silver Age* and will again with upcoming issues of *Divine Right*, likes the writer's work. "Scott has a great way of mixing good, dramatic tension with a dose of levity," Lee says. "He writes very brisk, snappy scripts blending humor with action in a very interesting way."

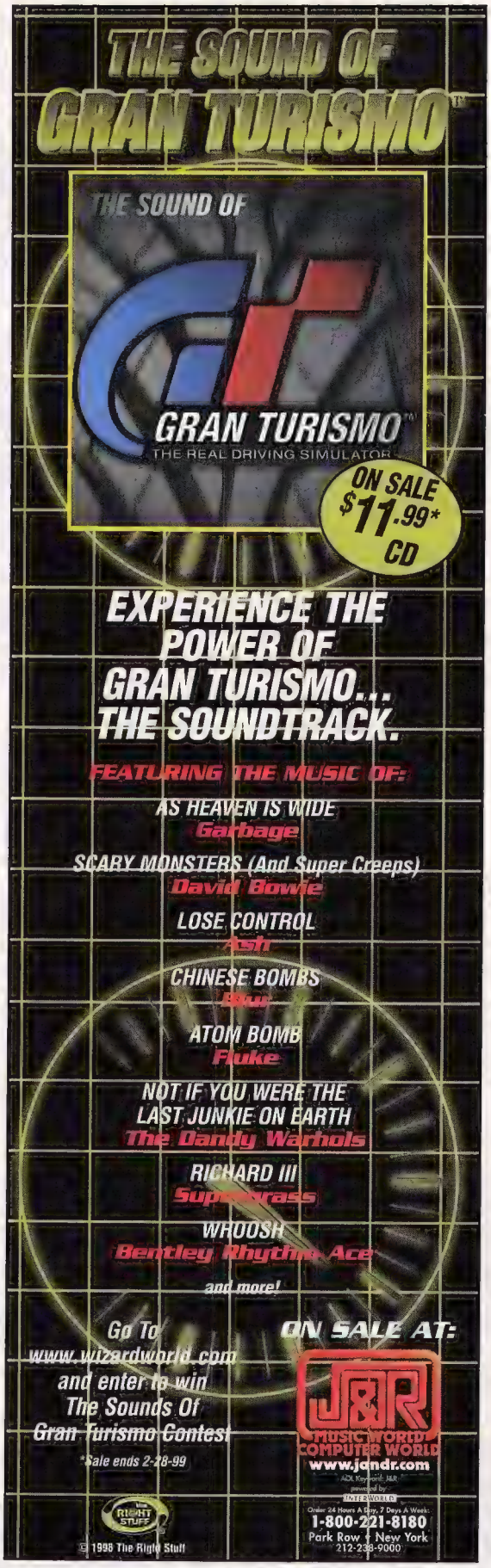
Lee reserves even higher praise for Charest: "Travis is just the Second Coming. If there's one guy who's gonna influence the next generation of artists, it's him. This could be what influences what happens in comic art for the next several years."

It might *take* several years for Charest to produce a handful of issues, if his past track record is any indication. The book's bimonthly schedule was set in place specifically to help Charest meet deadlines. "There's no way I'm gonna be able to do this book on a four-week schedule," Charest admits. "But we are definitely not going to let this book be late. There will not be a two-month gap. It's gonna ship on time."

If those deadlines are made, it will certainly pay off big-time for DC, if the early buzz is any indication. And for the naysayers who think any *Wildcats* book without Lee will flop, the man himself says otherwise.

"I think readers will be surprised how accessible the book is, even if they've never read *Wildcats* before," Lee says. "We're reuniting the team, but doing it slowly so readers can get in the groove. There's humor. There's characterization. There's tension. It's the total package."

New Jersey-based writers D.B. Nicholls and Chris Ryan would like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony. But they'll keep that Coke, thank you very much. (Additional reporting by Jim McLauchlin and Gregory Orlando.)



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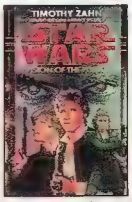

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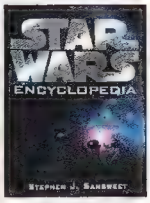

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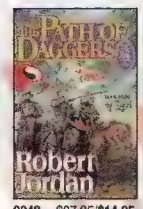

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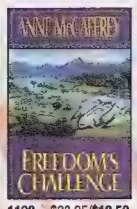

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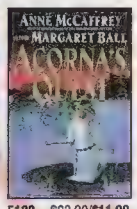

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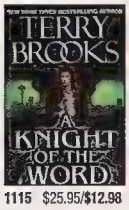

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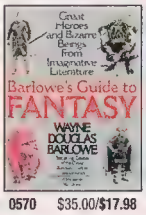

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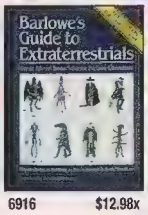

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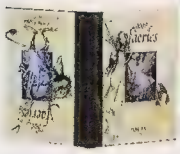
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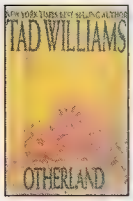

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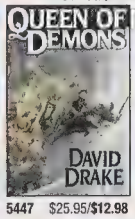

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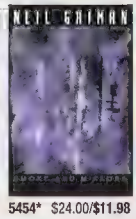

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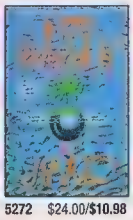
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SLAVE BOY An intern's job means lots of grunt work, but doing it right could nab you a comics job.

INTERN-AL AFFAIRS

So you want a future in comics? Pros reveal how working for nothing as an intern can pay off big in the long run

By Jennifer Moore

You've got big dreams, kid. ◆ You, and maybe 100,000 kids just like you. ◆ The question is, How do you get the edge over the other 99,999 schlubs competing for the same big break into the comics biz as you are? ◆ Simple. ◆ Get an internship. ◆ "You literally have your foot in the door of a comic publisher as an intern," says DC Executive Editor Mike Carlin. ◆ "It's a chance to have your work seen and opinion heard...as long as you're professional about presenting it." We chatted up editors and intern coordinators to give you a step-by-step guide on wedging your size-10 sneakers into the doors of some of the biggest companies in the business—without stepping on any toes along the way. ◆ We'll tell you what an intern is, how to become one, and how to turn your internship into a future comics career.

ALL PHOTOS BY PAUL SCHIAVONI

WHAT IS AN INTERN?

Despite what Monica Lewinsky would have you believe, being an intern isn't all pizza, cigars and pretty blue dresses. Internships are short-term, generally part-time positions offered by companies, usually either without pay or good for school credit toward a diploma. The bulk of internships offered by a comic company fall in the editorial and production departments, with positions in marketing, sales and promotions bringing up the rear. Interns are expected to do general administrative work, such as photocopying penciled and inked boards for books and filing reference material. Duties can range from mailing complimentary copies of comics to artists and writers, to processing freelancers' vouchers, to transporting proofs to the printer.

MUG SHOT Hey, even X-Men editor Mark Powers started out as an intern. So buck up if you're serious about sticking around in comics.

"The basic reality is that we need help editorially, not artistically," says Carlin, whose humble beginning in comics was an internship at DC in 1974. "There're plenty of artists out there already. We need people to do xeroxing and filing, real menial stuff which are also part of putting out a comic."

David Roman, a writer and independent publisher of his own comic, *Quicken Forbidden*, recently interned for DC's Cartoon Network line of comics. "In the beginning, I had a room to myself where I organized stuff that was sitting around for years, things like animation model sheets for the Animaniacs. [There were] hundreds and hundreds of pages, [like] 'Yakko in a dress' and 'Yakko wearing boots.' I did nothing but [file] tons of reference material for six hours straight."

The type of work you do can sometimes be dictated by the size of the company you approach for an internship. Smaller companies may need their interns to wear many different hats and perform many different tasks in the course of a day. Interns at these companies have done everything from proofreading, to interviewing artists and writers, to even writing actual story dialogue for the comics themselves.

Keep in mind that as an intern you're working closely with the editors and the staff on a daily basis. On the surface, you may be making copies and delivering mail, but beneath that, you're making friendships and connections that can help you establish your own career in comics.

HOW TO GET STARTED

If you're currently a student in high school or college, most publishers send an internship information package to your school's career center. These releases usually contain the number and duration of internships offered, hiring periods, the nature of the work, and whether or not payment or school credit is offered. Non-students are still eligible for internships at many companies; contact them directly for information (see sidebar). Getting this information first is important because it'll save you from spending a lot of time and effort only to discover that what a company's offering isn't what you're looking for.

Depending on its size, a publisher can offer anywhere from one internship per year to two or three per school semester. Small-press publishers generally have a very informal internship program, hiring people on an as-needed basis. By contrast, large companies such as Marvel and DC tend to have specific recruitment periods. For example, in order to intern for Marvel in the fall, résumés must be sent to the internship coordinator by July. Candidates interested in working for Marvel come spring should have their résumés in by November. And because summer internships are in such high demand, Marvel asks that those interested in working during that period submit applications as early as January.

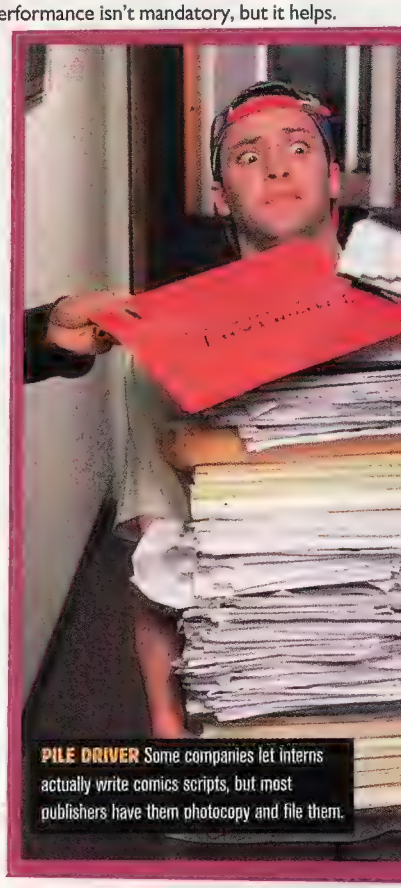
If a particular company you want to work for isn't listed among your school resources, don't despair; get in touch with them and find out yourself. "We've never had to advertise," says Sirius Entertainment Publisher Robb Horan, "because people are always coming to us wanting work."

The preferred mode of communication is via letter, addressed to the publisher's intern coordinator. If you're sending an e-mail to a company, make sure that the words "Internship Information" appear in the subject line so your message won't get lumped in with the rest of the fan mail. And as a general rule, try to avoid calling the company. "If someone calls us," says Horan, "they'll just be told to send us something in writing."

Once you've decided on a company to approach for an internship, you have to meet with a school counselor to determine whether or not you're eligible to receive school credit for the work. If so, then send off a cover letter, résumé and a letter from the school authorizing credit for internship work to the publisher of your choice. Including references such as former employers who can be contacted regarding your past work performance isn't mandatory, but it helps. Just make sure that you have their permission to use them as references before putting them on the résumé. Include any writing or art samples, such as a published article or your comic strip from the school or local paper. It shows recruiters that not only do you have an interest in publishing and comics, but that you can communicate clearly and effectively as well.

Non-students are also eligible for internships at certain companies. Just send off a letter, résumé and samples.

Don't be afraid to apply for internships at a number of different companies. It's always better to have several prospects on the horizon. Just be careful not to spread yourself too thin. You don't want to find yourself with five interviews with five different companies in one day.



PILE DRIVER Some companies let interns actually write comics scripts, but most publishers have them photocopy and file them.

THE INTERVIEW

With a little luck, you'll receive a phone call from a company's human resources department requesting that you come in for an interview.

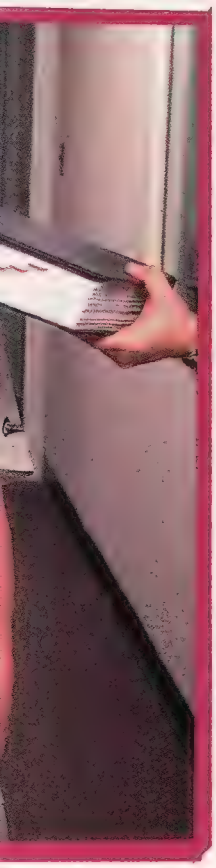
One factor that can determine a publisher's response time is the amount of candidates' résumés the recruiters have to sift through. Companies can receive as few as 25 inquiries a semester and as many as 200 as summer approaches, especially at companies like DC and Marvel. That's a lot of fish in the sea, and it's a big net sifting out the catches of the day. As few as 10 to 15 applicants are invited in for interviews, and only half of them are offered internships.

With all that competition, is it even worth sending in your résumé? "Almost everyone on staff up here at Marvel started out as interns at one time or another," says Mark Powers, editor of Marvel's *X-Men* comic and an ex-*X-Men* intern himself. At Top Cow Productions, the whole purpose of the intern program is to groom people for staff positions. How's that for incentive?

Usually, the larger publishers have an intern coordinator conduct a phone interview with a candidate before bringing them in for an interview with an editor. "I look for a well-balanced set of interests in a candidate," says Maria Campbell, intern coordinator for Marvel. "I ask them who their favorite Marvel characters are, their favorite writers, [their favorite] comic book writers and artists, what kind of music and books they like, what classes did they find interesting.... I see how articulate and easy on the phone they are, too." And, if you manage to articulate the pants off of the coordinator, chances are in a week they'll be asking you back to talk with an editor.

When interviewing in person, it's not necessary to break out the Armani three-piece suit. Generally, business casual is preferred within the hallowed halls of a comic publisher, meaning slacks or neat jeans, good shoes and a button-down shirt.

"I try to get a feel of whether or not they're serious-minded enough to dedicate themselves to working hard," says Powers. "I look for someone who has an interest in comics, or in illustration or writing, who will make themselves available to us—someone who wants feedback and communicates well. It helps if they know the books we publish, but it's not necessary. It just comes down to work ethic. We're asking you to do a job for free, basically; you've got to be willing to do that, to work hard and learn."



While enthusiasm is a quality editors admire, too much enthusiasm can hurt your chances of getting a job. "I don't want someone to come in here and say, 'I'm the biggest X-Men fan and can't wait to meet Joe Kelly,'" says Powers. "I'm sure they can't wait to meet Joe; he's a cool guy. All of us here at Marvel are comic fans, but telling me something like that says you're here to get your books signed, not to learn about the business. You're here for reasons other than being a professional."

If you're a budding artist or writer, bringing a portfolio to an interview won't hurt, but, chances are, it won't help either. Usually, it's best to hold off showing your work until *after* you've gotten an internship. "Unless they're interviewing for an internship in graphic design," says Horan, "it'd be inappropriate and kind of presumptuous to bring in [their] portfolio."

About a week after your interview, send a brief thank-you note to either the editor or the intern coordinator you spoke with, depending on whom you spoke with first. While it's good to

THE HIT LIST

You've got your résumé printed, your good shirt ironed, your breath minty fresh, and your game face on. So now what? Here's a quick resource list of companies for you to set your sights on. When sending letters of inquiry, be sure to include your résumé, references, samples if available, and a self-addressed stamped envelope to ensure you get the whole kit 'n' caboodle back. Unless otherwise noted, internships offered are either unpaid or good for school credit.

MARVEL COMICS
Attn: Maria Campbell,
intern coordinator
387 Park Avenue South
New York, NY 10016
Note: Only hires juniors and seniors in high school and college year-round.

DC COMICS
Attn: Intern coordinator
1700 Broadway
New York, NY 10019
Note: Only hires juniors and seniors in high school and college year-round.

TOP COW PRODUCTIONS
Attn: Human Resources
1223 Wilshire Blvd., #496
Santa Monica, CA 90401
Note: Hires two to three interns per year on an as-needed basis. Top Cow prefers to hire graduates and later assesses them for potential full-time positions.

SIRIUS ENTERTAINMENT
Attn: Mark Bellis, managing editor
P.O. Box 834
Dover, NJ 07802
e-mail: sirent@aol.com
Note: Send initial inquiries by e-mail; recruits two interns per year during summer. Send cover letters on school letterhead if requesting school credit.

WARP GRAPHICS
Attn: Richard Pini, publisher
43 Haight Ave.
Poughkeepsie, NY 12603
Note: Will offer stipend to help cover commuting and room-and-board expenses, if applicable. Recruits during spring and summer; one internship per year.

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS
Attn: Anthony Pulsither
7563 Lake City Way, N.E.
Seattle, WA 98115
Note: Offers unpaid or college-credit internships year-round in editorial, marketing and promotions. No phone calls, please!

CHAOS! COMICS
Attn: Gregg Pisani
7645 East Evans Road, Suite #6
Scottsdale, AZ 85260
Note: Recruits year-round on an as-needed basis.

SLAVE LABOR GRAPHICS
Attn: Dan Vado
325 South 1st Street, #301
San Jose, CA 95113
e-mail: danslave@aol.com
Note: Offers unpaid internships only; recruitment period in summer.

HARRIS COMICS
Attn: Seth Biederman
1115 Broadway, 8th floor
New York, NY 10010
e-mail: Horrornet@aol.com
Note: Offers two internships per year to high-school juniors and seniors and college freshmen and sophomores only.

WIZARD ENTERTAINMENT
Attn: Joe Yanarella
151 Wells Avenue
Congers, NY 10920
Note: Offers unpaid or college-credit internships year-round in editorial, graphic design, promotions, advertising, circulation and production. No phone calls, please! ■ JM

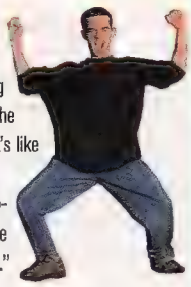
VETERANS SAY

It's easy to lose faith when you're knee-deep in photocopies and file folders in the intern trenches. Former foot soldiers who've gone on to become four-star generals in the comics industry share their war stories and show that there's life beyond the Xerox machine.

MIKE CARLIN, executive editor at DC Comics
Tour of Duty: DC Comics, 1974
"The most valuable thing I learned was what my limitations were. I wanted to be an artist, but after working with Jack Kirby and Walt Simonson, I realized that my talents would be better served guiding other people's work. I did xeroxing, but I used to make extra copies of Jack Kirby's pencils for myself so I could practice inking them at home."
Words of Wisdom: "If you go into an internship thinking you'll be bored, it's going to be boring. Your internship is what you make of it."

MARK POWERS, *X-Men* editor at Marvel Comics
Tour of Duty: Marvel Comics, 1989-1990
"I got to know a lot of people and was remembered by the staff because I interned with them twice. Six months after I graduated, Marvel called me and asked me to interview for an entry-level position."
Words of Wisdom: "Be persistent and professional. It's a different atmosphere [and] an interesting job, but a job, nonetheless."

JOE MADUREIRA, creator of Cliffhanger's *Battle Chasers*
Tour of Duty: Marvel Comics, 1990-1991
"I used to assemble 'make-readies,' which are proofs of the books before they come out. I'd cut them up, staple them and give them to all the editors. Seeing the book in every step of production lost some of the magic of comics for me; the mystery was gone. It's like learning how a magician does a trick."
Words of Wisdom: "Try to get into the internship program as early as possible, because if you don't make it the first time, you'll have plenty of time to try again."



MATTHEW SENREICH, *ToyFare* magazine editor; former *Wizard* staff writer
Tour of Duty: Marvel Comics, 1991; Defiant Comics, 1993; Broadway Comics, 1995; Comic Book Legal Defense Fund, 1996; Wizard Entertainment, 1997
"I pretty much sold my soul and would do anything for anyone who asked. . .which sounds pretty bad when you say it out loud. But the editors began to trust me and I got more high-profile jobs because I was willing to do the icky stuff they didn't want to deal with."
Words of Wisdom: "Take rejection in stride—for every missed opportunity, there'll be another door that opens."

TIM HERNANDEZ, creative director at Top Cow Productions
Tour of Duty: Top Cow Productions, 1994
"I was in high school when I became an intern; two weeks later, they created an office managing position for me. I'd come in every day after school doing all sorts of menial stuff for every department in the company. Now, I'm handling the licensing of our characters in TV, films and video games."
Words of Wisdom: "There's no job that's too low for an intern. A lot of the stuff I did as an intern still helps me in my daily work." ■ JM

follow up after an interview, calling the offices daily will brand you as a nuisance. Play it cool. If a publisher likes you, they'll call you, but it'll take anywhere from a day to three weeks after your interview.

Unfortunately, one of the risks involved in interviewing for a job is rejection. If you don't get that coveted callback, don't get discouraged. Many times "no" means "not right now."

"Sometimes people get turned down for an internship, re-interview at a later date, and *then* get the job," says Campbell. "It may be because the person they interviewed with wasn't looking for anyone at the time, or already had the position filled. One guy applied over the summer, got turned down, then got accepted for the fall semester. He works full-time at Marvel now."

SMMMMOKIN'! If an editor can trust you with small tasks as an intern, he might want to hire you full-time to give you more important ones.

YOU'VE GOT THE JOB!

Let's say that you've finally been rewarded with an internship of your very own. The question is, now that you've got it, What's the best way of making your limited time at the company count? Sure, you're chock full of revolutionary ideas that'll change the face of comics as we know it, but you've got to know when and where it's appropriate to give your opinion.

"Listen to everything," says Powers. "You've got a lot of ideas in the beginning, but first you have to earn the trust of the editors you're working for. Build a relationship with these people and bit by bit they'll come to value what you have to say."

Part of building that relationship is volunteering for work at every opportunity. Whenever you find yourself with nothing to do, seek out work. If you have a question about something you're doing, don't hesitate to ask questions. It's always better to be cautious than to risk botching a job, and editors will appreciate that you're taking the time to ask them.

Once you've made a few friends and established yourself as a reliable, trustworthy person among the staffers, you can start showing your portfolio around. Because they know you and see you every day, editors will be more willing to take the time to look at your stuff and give you feedback.

"After I showed my editor my portfolio, she went out of her way to promote me throughout the department," says Roman. "Since my internship, I've started writing the letter columns for all the Cartoon Network books, and have made some valuable connections in the industry. There are a lot of opportunities available to me now that I never would have had without my internship."

New York-based writer Jennifer Moore would like her own intern. Then that person would have an inside track at becoming her full-time personal slave.

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THE WIZARD Q&A:

BY GREG ORLANDO • PHOTOS BY PAUL SCHIRALDI

Former X-writer and current 'Gambit' scribe **FABIAN NICIEZA** reveals why he's back at Marvel and softened his stance on never writing the X-Men again

FABIAN NICIEZA

Fabian Nicieza props himself up against a dark, wooden bookshelf, mugs for photos and begins to berate an action figure.

"You suck, Slayback," the 37-year-old writer and former editor tells the toy. "You know how I know? It's because no other writer has resurrected you." Slayback, a character Nicieza created for Marvel Comics' 1993 Deadpool mini-series, remains decidedly plastic on the matter of his suckitude. Or his creator's sanity.

Don't get the wrong idea, though. Nicieza, a 12-year-plus comics veteran, is all-too-sane. He began his career laboring in Marvel's manufacturing department, but graduated to writer in 1987. Marvel Comics was Nicieza's playground, and *Cable*, *New Warriors*, *X-Force* and *X-Men* (among others) his proverbial swing set.

Seeking new challenges, Nicieza jumped ship in 1996 to serve as Acclaim Comics' editor in chief and, later, as its publisher in a last-ditch attempt to salvage the company. Ultimately, though, Acclaim ceased publication of comics in 1998 and all roads led Nicieza back to Marvel. Now, he's penning the new *Gambit* series, doing scripting work for his old friends on *X-Men*, working out of his house, and balancing his job with the demanding duties of a family man.

Nicieza plans to be interviewed in his New Jersey home's basement office, but changes gears to accommodate his wife's desire to burn calories on the downstairs treadmill. So instead, he situates himself in a corner of the black, flower-patterned, wicker sofa in his cheery sun room for a lengthy interview. As the sunlight filters softly through the room's many windows, Nicieza, who's comfortably dressed in a gray, checkered shirt and black pants, pulls at his earlobe. He gestures with whatever hand is free at the moment, and speaks forcefully and at some length. "When you talk to me," he says, "there's no such thing as 'abridged.'"

His voice, simultaneously deep and mellow, rings with authority. It is the voice of a man not afraid to torment a pile of plastic.

VITAL STATS

NAME: Fabian Nicieza (pronounced NEE–see–EH–zuh).
OCCUPATION: Writer of Marvel's *Gambit* and scripter of *X-Men*.
BORN: New Year's Eve, 1961 in Buenos Aires, Argentina.
BASE OF OPERATIONS: A basement office in his New Jersey home.
CAREER HIGHLIGHTS: Nicieza started out in Marvel's manufacturing department in the mid-1980s, but soon joined editorial as an editor and writer. In the early '90s, he gained a rep as Marvel's workhorse, writing seven titles at the same time, including *X-Men, X-Force, Cable* and *New Warriors*. His most memorable moments include the removal of Wolverine's adamantium (*X-Men* #25), the wedding of Cyclops and Phoenix (*X-Men* #30), and his role as co-conspirator in 1995's controversial "Age of Apocalypse" X-crossover.
FAVORITE PIECE OF GAMBIT-SPEAK: "Whatever doesn't get changed by editorial to throw extra D's into it."

WIZARD: Is this the house the X-Men built?

NICIEZA: This is the house that [*X-Force* co-creator] Rob Liefeld built. This house and where I live is the result of a few, very, very good years of comic publishing.

There was a point for almost a year and a half where I was selling 1.9 million comics a month [writing *X-Force*, *X-Men* and *Cable*]. So that was a lot of work. You have to remember I was writing seven books a month at the height of the industry, plus annuals and specials, and all of those books were [each] selling over 150,000 copies for a long time. Even crap was selling back then. I certainly wrote my share of crap during that time period, but you're not going to say no to somebody when they hand you a check, because you're getting royalties on the sales of your book and quality is subjective.

As far as high sales, you've recently returned to the X-Men books, scripting Alan Davis' plots for "The Magneto War." Are you gearing up to be a regular X-Men writer again?

If you had asked me four years ago would I ever write the X-Men again, my answer would have been unprintable. If you would have asked me two years ago would I ever write the X-Men again, my answer would've been printable, but it would've been, 'I sincerely don't think so.' If you had asked me six months ago when I just left Acclaim would I ever write the X-Men again, my answer was, to a few people, 'I don't expect I would ever write another book with an 'X' in front of it again.'

If anyone asks me now, would you ever see yourself writing X-Men again, my answer is, 'I don't know.' It would have to depend on the circumstances involved.

What lured you back to the X-Men?

It was an opportunity to work with two artists I totally respect, [who are] newcomer Leinil Francis Yu [on *Uncanny X-Men* #366-#367] and established veteran, Alan Davis [on *X-Men* #86-#87], who I always was hoping to work with, and the cherry on top was that Lee Weeks was drawing the *X-Men: Magneto War* prequel issue, which I didn't even know existed when they first asked us about the assignment. So I look at it as a fun, little, self-contained story. It's almost the sequel to "Fatal Attractions" [the X-crossover where Magneto returned to his villainous roots] and I love the character of Magneto. I think he's a wonderfully conflicted character and it's a very straightforward, uncomplicated story. The consequences of the X-Men's actions and the consequences of Magneto's actions tie in pretty nicely at the end to re-create a bit of the status quo for the books.

You're also writing an X-Men spinoff with Gambit. What have you got planned for it?

It's going to be a book about adventure and it's going to be a book about humor and it's going to be a book about soap opera. It's going to be a book about moral consequences and moral conflict, and that's what you would get on a regular basis.

Give us your take on Gambit as a character.

I think that he's a really interesting character because we don't mince about the fact that he's done wrong things and that he's done dumb things. You can romanticize the notion of a thief as much as you want to and that's one problem that we have with the character and possible conflicts between different writers' visions and editorial visions—how much do you romanticize what a thief is before you start to admit what a thief is? A thief is someone who steals something from someone else. Whether it's for noble or altruistic reasons or not, does that mean that every single time he stole anything was for a noble and altruistic reason? [*Loudly*] I don't think so.

Are you going to mess with Gambit's powers at all?

I'm sticking to the guns of what we have established. Gambit kinetically charges objects and tends to hold them in his hand and to release the energy through his pores. Can he release the energy through other parts of his body? "Cinemax Friday After Dark" will show you that [*Laughs*], but actually, the truth of the matter is, yes, he can, and in the very first issue Steve [Skroce, *Gambit* penciler] came up with an absolutely wonderful bit for him and how to use his powers. So he can charge things with his toes. He can charge things with his ass. He can do that.

Speaking of butts, whose butt will Gambit be kicking?

Steve and I are trying to create a real rogues gallery that could equal the likes of Batman's rogues gallery or even Dick Tracy's rogues gallery. We got a straightforward, gung-ho X-villain like Executioner becoming a main antagonist for him, but we also got very odd, quirky villains mixed in like the Pig.

There's a brand-new character called The Fontanel, [who affects] the soft spot in your head in terms of digging at you and she analyzes you through your dreams. She's trying to find stuff out about Gambit; every month she's analyzing another supporting character's mind about their perception of Gambit and there's a reason why she's doing this and we get into all of that.

We have a big, mysterious villain we think, or hope, called the New Son, who is a background figure driving a lot of the things that go on in the book. In essence, he's a Mr. Sinister kind of manipulator, although possibly he may not even be a villain, which would be interesting to explore as well.

assignment. I asked the editor, "So what's in the vial?" and Mark Powers sort of like gave me this silence. So I said, "Okay, well I guess we've got to work on that, don't we?"

One of the things you're most noted for was the removal of Wolverine's adamantium in X-Men #25...

Good issue actually. I like it. [It was former *X-Factor* writer] Peter David's idea. He threw that out in one of the X-meetings as a total joke saying, [*Raises voice to imitate David's squeaky voice*] "Well, why doesn't Magneto finally just rip his adamantium right out of his body?" and there was literally a hush over the entire table and that's when Peter realized we were all taking the concept seriously and he just slammed the table in his Peter David way and said, [*Imitates David again*] "I was kidding." It became the focal point of that whole story.

Did you expect that the story line would go on *ad nauseam*?

No. I will definitively state on record that we did not expect at the time that the story would go *ad nauseam*, and when you say that I don't disagree. Back then, I think we all expected that we would push it to [*Wolverine*] #100, which was a two-year arc, which is quite a bit of an arc anyway, but an acceptable one.

I think they decided that everyone expected it to happen with #100, so they decided not to do it, and I wasn't there at the time. I had already left pretty much my day-to-day involvement with Marvel. I was already down to one book a month at that point, so I didn't even read *Wolverine* #100 until just a couple months ago because I had it in a stack of Marvel comics that I hadn't filed for two years [*Raises voice*] while I was with Acclaim, and when I read it I was like, Wow, this could've been a good opportunity to give him his skeleton back.

Speaking of Acclaim, it must have been difficult calling the shots during a tumultuous time. What was it like being its editor in chief and publisher?

"You can romanticize the notion of a thief as much as you want to... A thief is someone who steals something from someone else."

–FABIAN NICIEZA, on Gambit

CARD SHARKS Nicieza wants Gambit to have a rogues gallery that equals the likes of Batman or Dick Tracy.

We hear it was New Son that rescued Gambit from Antarctica.

In the *Gambit* #1/2 issue I'm doing, which takes place after *Uncanny X-Men* #350 and before the new *Gambit* series, we see Gambit on a rescue ship that New Son dispatched to retrieve him. But obviously, something else happened before New Son literally plucked him off the ice shelf because we've shown a second set of footprints in the snow [in *Uncanny X-Men* #360].

Let's think small for a minute. What was in the vial Mr. Sinister gave Gambit in Uncanny X-Men #350?

I don't know. I didn't even read #350 until after I got the *Gambit*

It was equal parts real fun and a great learning experience and also very difficult to do. It is a very hard thing to run an entire company, to have 30 people's lives depending on your ability to make the right decision, plus freelancers and all the rest. It's really hard. *You* try laying off 17 out of 23 people. *You* try laying off a person who is five months pregnant and who you consider a friend.

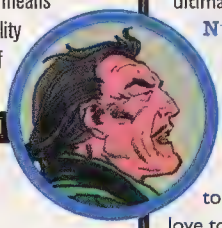
Do you think Acclaim ultimately failed because it didn't strike a chord with the readers?

I think by the time we tried to revamp the superhero line it was too little too late. The combination of not being able to keep some of those creative people [writers Kurt Busiek and Mark Waid, among others] on the books longer than their first arc hurt, but also the

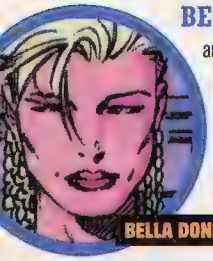
THIEVES' GUILD

If X-Man Gambit doesn't want it, it's not worth swiping. The thief-turned-hero Remy LeBeau did hard time on the frozen continent Antarctica, but he's back from his X-Men-imposed exile and stealing the show each month with his new *Gambit* title. Here's a rundown of the book's guilty parties (and innocent players).

GAMBIT His name, Remy LeBeau, literally translated means "Remy the handsome," and he's possessed of the mutant ability to charge inanimate objects with explosive power. A member of the X-Men, LeBeau finds himself compelled to steal items for the mysterious "New Son."


JEAN-LUC LeBEAU

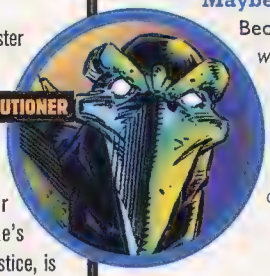
JEAN-LUC LeBEAU Gambit's ne'er-do-well adopted dad is a member of the mysterious Thieves' Guild.


BELLA DONNA

BELLA DONNA Gambit's estranged ex-wife. She's an assassin still harboring a mad-on for her former spouse.

THE X-MEN Gambit is part of this team, and one of the family. Expect guest appearances by the mutants of the X-Men, but only when the story will support it. X-woman Rogue appears in issues #1 and #4 and Storm appears in issue #2 as she and Gambit thrash out (literally) some issues.

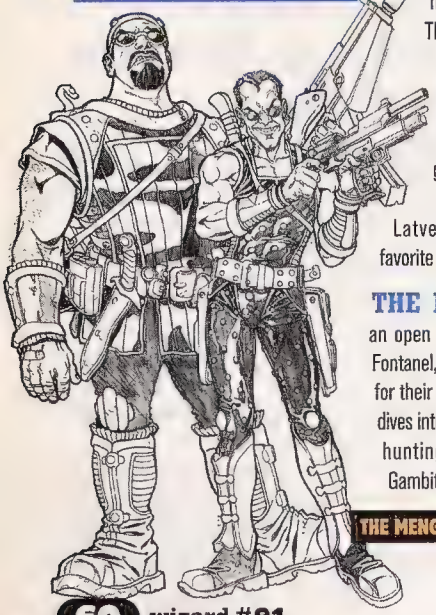
NEW SON Is he friend or foe? Only time will tell, but this master manipulator did dispatch a ship to rescue Gambit from Antarctica.


EXECUTIONER

THE EXECUTIONER This super-policeman works for the FBI and may just become Gambit's arch-foe. The man is Gambit's polar opposite, which means he's law-abiding, believes in justice, is stiff as a board, and has absolutely no sense of humor.

THE PIG

THE PIG This pork is rancid. A freakish mutant, Pig lives high on the proverbial hog-supplying soldiers to criminal groups HYDRA and The Hand. He does this by making his goons steal children. The swine.


THE MENGO BROTHERS

THE MENGO BROTHERS If ugly was a crime, these no-goodniks would be doing life without parole. They're Latverian mercenaries whose favorite color is monetary green.

THE FONTANEL Minds are an open book to the woman named Fontanel, who probes people's dreams for their secrets. Each issue, Fontanel dives into a different character's mind, hunting for their perceptions of Gambit. ■ GO

combination of the brand name at retail and the lack of the sufficient follow-through coverage, *Wizard* included.

You can always say it's a two-sided coin. Maybe we would've been covered more if we had better material, or maybe we should've been covered more in order to see the material that was there. I can see the argument for either case. I think that the superheroes relaunch, from a qualitative standpoint, probably was no better than a C, C+ overall [grade] and that's why it failed. I think ultimately then it deserved to fail.

Now that you're a freelance writer again, do you have a dream project?

Yeah. I want to do anything with Superman. My top five choices at DC are: 1) *Superman*, 2) *Nightwing*, 3) *Superman*, 4) *Robin* and 5) *Superman*.

I would love a shot at *Fantastic Four* at Marvel. I would love to write Dr. Strange, but it's being handled right now. I would love to write Black Widow. It's [also] being handled right now.

Before we go, what's the one question you've always wanted to be asked but never were?

How does it feel to be so damn, incredibly sexy? I've always wanted to be asked that.

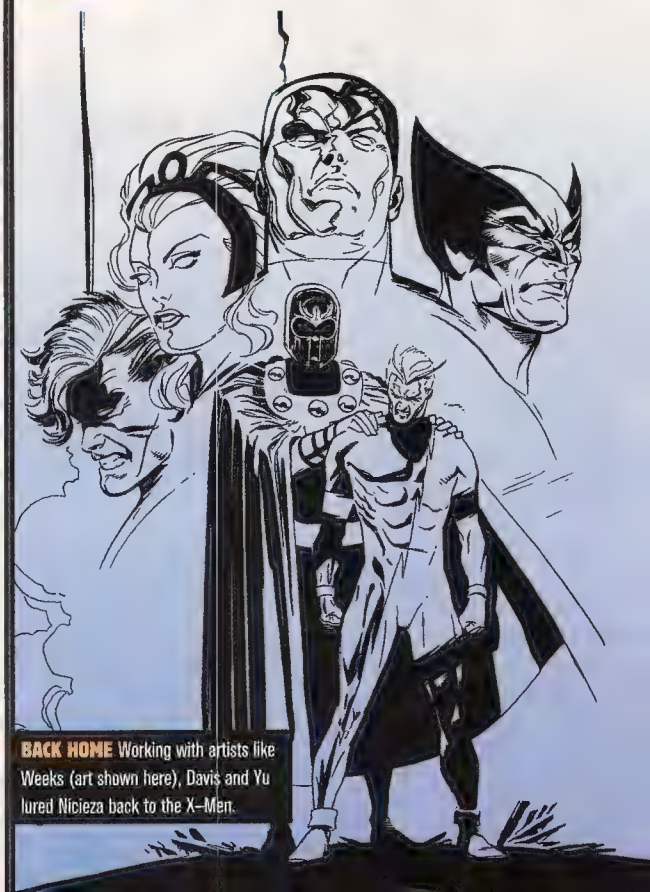
Um. Okay. How helpful is New Jersey to the creative process?

[*Laughs*] You skipped right over that question. You were supposed to ask me, "How does it feel to be so damn, incredibly sexy?"

Maybe we'll get back it to some other time.

Because my answer is, [*Voice drops to almost a whisper*] It feels good. W

Wizard editor Greg Orlando drives the Orlandomobile, wields the fabled "Orlando Magic," and lives in a house he affectionately calls Chez Orlando. His ego weighs 44 pounds.



BACK HOME Working with artists like Weeks (art shown here), Davis and Yu lured Nicieza back to the X-Men.

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by casey lau, kaare andrews and tom & mary bierbaum

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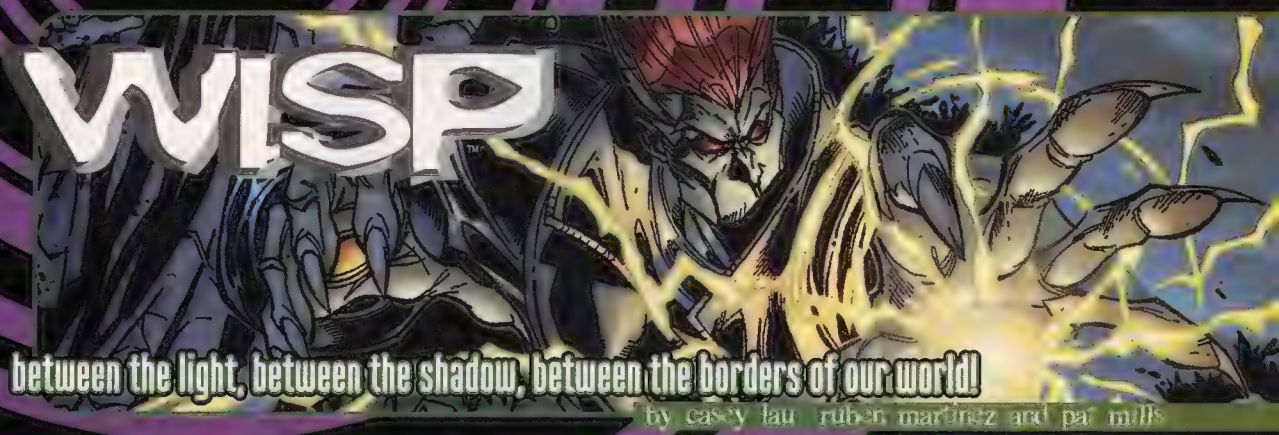
by casey lau, kano and mike baron



between the light, between the shadow, between the borders of our world!

by casey lau, ruben martinez and pat mills

3 amazing creative teams!
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3 MUST HAVE COMICS!
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CASTING call

WIZARD casts the CRIMSON MOVIE!

BY A BUNCH OF WIZARD STAFFERS

Hollywood's gotta tap this vein.

On the worst day of his life, young teen Alex Elder becomes vampire chow and awakens to a whole new world. He starts growin' fangs, develops a craving for corpuscles, and finds the sun and wooden stakes to be his mortal enemies. And you thought puberty was bad...

Cancel the prom and forget about tomorrow's chemistry test, 'cause young Alex is now a bloodsucker. Caught up in a vampire war and hunted by the mysterious "Red Hood" slayers, Alex's life just became fodder for a great film.

With the proper script and cast, a "Crimson" movie could be the scariest thing since Hollywood Hogan announced he's running for president. Shot on location in New York City, "Crimson" would paint the town blood-red. Literally.

Undead or alive, it makes no difference—everyone wants a bloody good time and "Crimson" is just the flick to provide it.

ELIJAH WOOD as **ALEX ELDER**

Pinchable cheeks, a mischievous twinkle in the eye and a disarming smile are "The Faculty" star Elijah Wood's weapons of mass appeal—just exactly what he'd need to bring life to the undead Alex Elder.

ANGELICA BRIDGES as SCARLET

Vampires would consider it an honor to be staked by the babelicious Angelica Bridges (TV's "Baywatch"), who'd be perfect as the scantily clad slayer Scarlet.

CLAIRE DANES as JULIE

Alex's girlfriend Julie will be played by teen-angst queen Claire Danes from the angst-dripping TV show, "My So Called Life."

RON PERLMAN as EKIMUS

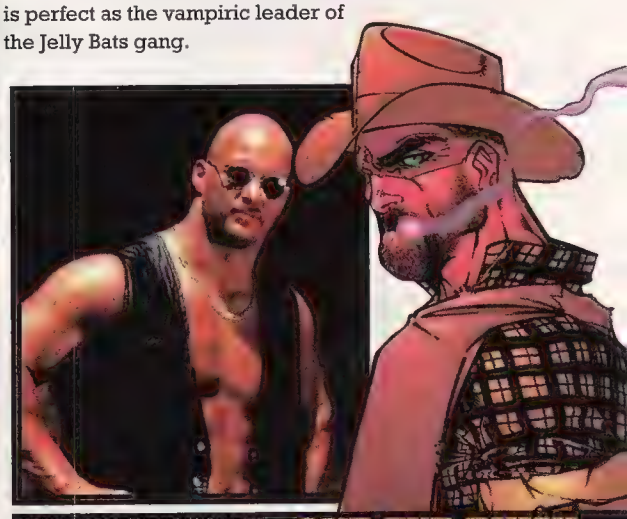
Makeup! Take Ron Perlman (TV's "Beauty and the Beast") into the trailer and do him up like the vampire Ekimus. When it comes to playing beasts, Perlman's the master.

ADAM BEACH as JOE

Extend his canine teeth about four inches and you can call Adam Beach from "Smoke Signals" a dead ringer for the loony bloodsucker Joe the Indian.

SCARY SPICE as ROSE THE PUPPET

On our top 10 list of scary things, singer Melanie Brown (a.k.a. Scary Spice of the Spice girls) is eight of them. With a smile that could scare a corpse, Scary Spice is perfect as the vampiric leader of the Jelly Bats gang.

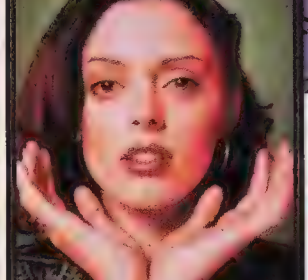


STONE COLD STEVE AUSTIN as ONE EYE PHISH

Austin 3:16 says if we don't cast wrestler Stone Cold Steve Austin as vampire brawler One Eye Phish, he'll drop-kick our mothers and then beat them with a steel chair. And that's the bottom line.

GEORGE CLOONEY as SENATOR VAN FLEET

Most politicians just suck money from their constituents, but debonair creep Van Fleet wants blood, too. George Clooney's proven he can do debonair to perfection—even in a stinker like "Batman and Robin."



ROSE McGOWAN as CRAZY ELVIRA

Rose McGowan ("Scream") dates rock star Marilyn Manson. That's well in excess of the USDA-recommended allowance for craziness. Commit her or let her play the sex-crazed Crazy Elvira.

QUIET ON THE SET!

ELIJAH WOOD © DAVID STRICK, GEORGE CLOONEY © GERARDO SOMOZA, ANGELICA BRIDGES © YANN GAMBLIN, SCARY SPICE © STEPHEN ELLISON, ROSE MCGOWAN © JEFFEREY

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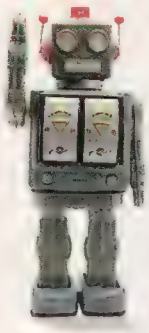

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FANTASTIC VOYAGE

Marvel's First Family prepares for big-screen journey

Meet the new Fantastic Four: **Chris Columbus**, Michael Barnathan, Mark Radcliffe and Bernt Eichinger.

No, they don't have any superpowers. No cosmic radiation. Heck, they've never even been inside a rocket. But in terms of the power cosmic, they've got plenty in spades.

That's because these four are the producers of a live-action "Fantastic Four" film for 20th Century Fox, based on the Marvel comic. And while this project's been years in the making, an all-new script by screenwriter **Sam Hamm** (1989's "Batman") has breathed new life into Marvel's First Family.

"The people who have read the script, who are real Marvel fans, feel it's the best adaptation of a Marvel comic to date," said Barnathan. "It retains the spirit of the comics but it also makes the necessary adjustments to become a movie."

20th Century Fox's involvement with "Fantastic Four" began back in 1992, when indie movie producer Roger Corman was all set to release a low-budget "FF." But Corman's film was pushed aside when director Chris Columbus ("Home Alone," "Mrs. Doubtfire") stepped in. Soon the rights were purchased, Corman's "FF" was shelved (finding its way into the comic convention circuit via bootleg copies), and the project was in development for 20th Century Fox.

Columbus felt "FF" deserved to be a major blockbuster that lived up to the legend Stan Lee and Jack Kirby created three decades earlier. He also wanted to put out a film that would be true to the comics and one that fans would want to see. "Chris originally wanted to be a comic book artist," Barnathan revealed. "*Fantastic Four* was one of the comics that most inspired him. He's a huge Kirby fan."

Despite Columbus' involvement, the project's road to big-screen development has been as rocky as The Thing's hide. After going through two directors and three writers, Columbus turned to Hamm in the spring of 1998. Hamm, a comic fan himself, first read *Fantastic Four* with issue #5, the first appearance of the tyrannical Dr. Doom. It's no surprise then, that the FF's arch-nemesis is the main villain in his script.

"In large measure [my draft] is based on an earlier draft by Michael France ("GoldenEye") and Chris Columbus," Hamm said. "The FF's origin story has been compressed a bit because it's a

FOUR SCORE A live-action "FF" movie may kick off the new millennium.

CLOSE UP CHRIS COLUMBUS

FACTS & FACES

CHRIS COLUMBUS, 39, began his film career writing youth-oriented films such as "Gremlins" and "The Goonies," before moving on to successfully direct such movies as "Adventures in Babysitting" and "Home Alone" which thrust him into the limelight. He is currently one of the key players in a big-budget live-action "Fantastic Four" film for 20th Century Fox.

COLUMBUS: HUNT, DAVOM, FRANZ, PRIDZE, JR. AND BARNATHAN: COURTESY OF EVERETT COLLECTION; FRANKS: ALAN LEVINSON/OUTLINE; LILLARD: COURTESY OF FOTO FANTASES

movie. Without going too deeply into the plot, Doctor Doom's master plan is to get ahold of the four of them. The creation of the Fantastic Four ties in directly with his ultimate goals."

One of Hamm's tasks (and the project's biggest problem) was to get the film's budget down; the first draft was estimated at costing $120 million. "We're constantly trying to bring the budget down," Hamm explained of his script trimming, "but when you've got three characters who're CGI [computer generated imagery] and one whose lines will be dubbed in afterwards [the unseen Invisible Woman], well, it's probably going to be very costly."

Still, Hamm promises that Ben Grimm's metamorphosis into the Thing will be spectacular. "A large part of the story takes place while Ben is in mid-transformation," Hamm revealed. "Ben's armor sprouts when he gets cuts or abrasions, so by the third act he's covered in his rocky orange plates."

To add a human element to the ever-loving blue-eyed Thing, the producers are hoping to put a man inside the monster. "We're anticipating to build some kind of real physical Ben an actor can work inside of. There are certain gags inside the movie that may require using computer generation," said Barnathan about Grimm's effects. "But yes, we'd like to use a real actor. We'd like to see an actor's eyes."

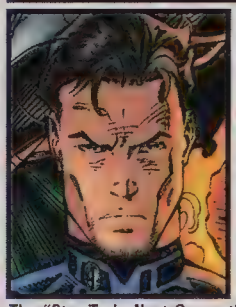
As soon as the new draft comes in, the group will be sending it out to directors, optimistic that filming will commence in the year ahead. "The studio totally loves it and we're anticipating a January '99 pre-production start. I can't say when it will come out but it could be as early as summer 2000." ■ PATRICK SAURIOL

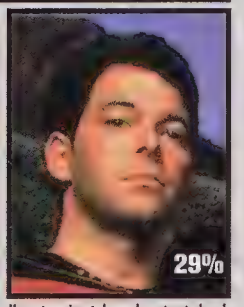
FANTASTICFINDS

YOU CAST THE FF MOVIE

Sure, a live-action "Fantastic Four" movie may be a few years off, but that didn't stop us from finding out who'd best fill those blue and white uniforms. Through an online poll conducted by Wizard (www.wizardworld.com), we asked fans who they'd most like to see play Marvel's First Family. The results are nothing short of fantastic.

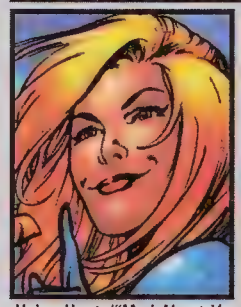
MISTER FANTASTIC: JONATHAN FRAKES

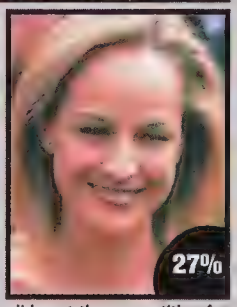




The "Star Trek: Next Generation" actor just barely stretched past "Jurassic Park" star Jeff Goldblum (28 percent) and flew past "Apollo 13"'s Tom Hanks (16 percent) for the role of the FF's team leader.

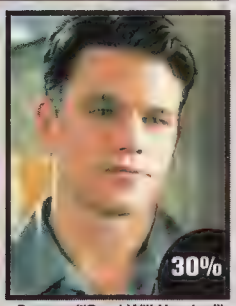
INVISIBLE WOMAN: HELEN HUNT





Helen Hunt ("Mad About You") slid past the competition for the FF's "mother" figure. Just behind her was Meg Ryan ("You've Got Mail") with 20 percent and Jeri Ryan ("Star Trek: Voyager") at 19 percent.

HUMAN TORCH: MATT DAMON



In the hot-headed department, Matt Damon ("Good Will Hunting") sizzled past "Saved By the Bell" star Mark Paul-Gosselar who took in 29 percent, while Casper Van Dien ("Starship Troopers") nabbed 20 percent.

THE THING: DENNIS FRANZ

When it comes to voicing the gruff but lovable Yancy Street thug, fans clearly thought Dennis Franz ("NYPD Blue") fit the bill. He squashed the competition: Brad Garrett ("Everybody Loves Raymond") scored 17 percent and Lawrence Tierney ("Reservoir Dogs") nailed 15 percent. ■ SORRELL BOOKE

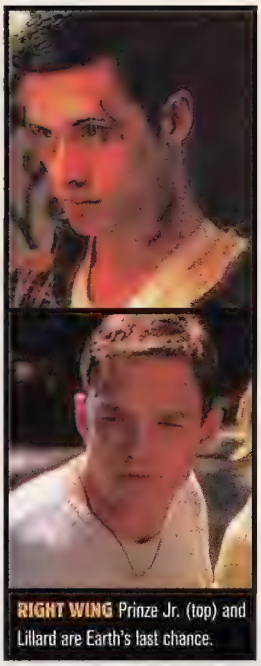
'WING' AND A PRAYER

Humanity's hopes lie in Fox's "Wing Commander" film

You say you want an evolution? Well, if today's top video game companies have their way, you will. Thanks to big screen releases of video game-based films such as "Street Fighter" and "Mortal Kombat," the way has been paved for future endeavors. And with films in the works based on Eidos Interactive's super-popular *Tomb Raider*, Capcom's zombie-killing *Resident Evil* and Origin Games' *Wing Commander* series, fans will soon be leaving their joysticks at the door and grabbing buckets of popcorn instead.

Scheduled for release later this year, "Wing Commander" is set to soar first, as "Tomb Raider" and "Resident Evil" are still in early development. **Freddie Prinze, Jr.** ("I Know What You Did Last Summer") and **Matthew Lillard** ("Scream") star as two rookie starship space pilots thrown into combat against a threatening alien invasion. Directed by Chris Roberts, the creator of the video games, the 20th Century Fox film is budgeted at $30 million but reportedly features spectacular special effects.

"It's World War II, 700 years in the future," Prinze, son of the late, legendary comedian Freddie Prinze, said. The basic plot sees Earth united and now called the Confederation. Another race, called the Kilrathi, have been trying to take over our galaxy. Humanity's managed to survive thanks to a navigational computer called a Navcom, which helps chart pilots through black holes and quasars, saving space travel like 40 years.



RIGHT WING Prinze Jr. (top) and Lillard are Earth's last chance.

"So the Kilrathi get one of these Navcoms, and they have the coordinates to get into Earth's space," Prinze said. "They'll be there in 40 hours. The Confederation ships can't get back to Earth for 42 hours. So there's one ship between the Kilrathi and this jump point, and we're flying in that ship, me and Matt. So it's this last big stand for the Earth, against the Kilrathi, and it's the ingenuity of these pilots that has them defeat this warrior race. It's really sick. It's cool." ■ **JENNY PETERS**

STAR WARS PREQUEL WATCH

ANY DAY NOW

STARDATE: MAY 21,1999

SPOILER WARNING: The following column reveals specific plot points about "Star Wars: Episode I–The Phantom Menace," gathered from inside sources, leaked photographs and action figure card descriptions.

It's now confirmed that Anakin Skywalker and his mother Shmi are introduced in the film as slaves owned by a winged creature named Watto, a Toydarian junk dealer who owns a shop in the Tatooine city of Mos Espa. Anakin attempts to win his freedom in a pod race on Tatooine, clips of which have been already seen in the trailers....Not only is Anakin an expert in building and operating machines, but he also assembles his own droid: C-3PO!...There are apparently two Dark Lords of the Sith in the film. Darth Maul, the sinister-looking alien with red tattoos covering his face, wields a double-bladed lightsaber. And Maul reports to a higher power known as Darth Sidious. Reports indicate that Sidious is the true "phantom menace" the film is named after, but his identity still remains a secret. ■ **PS**

HEROES STAYIN' ALIVE

"Batman," "Superman" films still in the works

Just when you thought all the Warner Bros./DC Comics projects had landed in the crapper, along comes **Mark Canton**.

President of Worldwide Theatrical Production for Warner Bros., Canton created the "Batman" franchise and hired both Tim Burton and Michael Keaton. After a stint running Sony Pictures, Canton's back on the Warner Bros. lot as an independent producer; and most importantly, he's a fountain of information on what's happening with "Superman Lives" and "Batman."

UP AT BAT Warner Bros. could bring Keaton back to the cave.

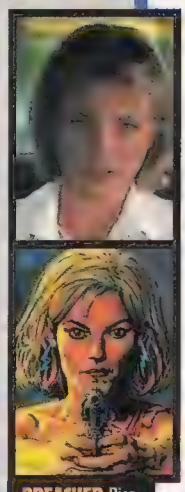
"I think the [Warner Bros. executives] didn't like the screenplay on 'Superman,' but they now do," he said on the frequently delayed **Nicolas Cage** project. And Canton confirms that, while Burton is out as a director, Cage is still very much in for the leading role. "Nic is still going to do it. That's what I hear. I don't think it's going to happen that soon, but I think in the next year or so, it's going to happen."

As for "Batman," Canton admits he'd like to see the original Dark Knight—**Michael Keaton**—and Burton return to revive the ailing franchise. "If I could figure out how to get us all back, I would do it, believe me. I've thought of it. We've talked about it." ■ **JP** (W)

TRAILERS...

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION?

'PREACHER' MAKES A MOVE: Seems that before the end of last year, financing was approved for a live-action "Preacher" film, based on Garth Ennis' irreverent Vertigo comic. With that significant hurdle passed, initial casting offers have begun. Ben Affleck ("Armageddon"), Cameron Diaz ("There's Something About Mary"), Robert Carlysle ("The Full Monty") and Samuel L. Jackson ("Star Wars: Episode One") have been approached about roles in the film–and no, not as Arseface. Actually, they've been offered roles as Jesse Custer, Tulip, Cassidy and the Saint of Killers, respectively.



PREACHER Diaz might star as Tulip.

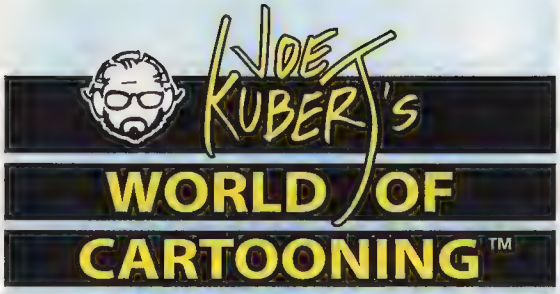
TOMB RAIDED: So what's happening with Paramount's big-screen version of "Tomb Raider" you ask? According to producer Lawrence Gordon's office, the old script by Brent Friedman ("Mortal Kombat Annihilation") is out and a new script by an unnamed screenwriter is being penned right now. What happened? Maybe it had something to do with the negative fan reaction when a super-critical review of Friedman's script was leaked to the Internet, or maybe there's some truth to the rumors the studio is undecided what to beef up: heroine Lara Croft's characterization or the action sequences. (Check out *Wizard*'s review of *Tomb Raider III*, in this month's "Video Stuff" on page 88.)

SANDMAN FILM–DREAM ON: Fans probably wouldn't recognize Lord Morpheus in the latest draft for a "Sandman" motion picture based on the Neil Gaiman Vertigo comic. In it, the Dream Lord acts and talks more like he's wearing a wrestler's costume rather than the regal cloak of one of the Endless. Word is the script's already through the out door. To check out an earlier draft by Roger Avary ("Pulp Fiction"), visit the journal section of his Web site at www.avary.com.

TOTALLY RECALLED: Cable network Showtime has picked up the rights to "Total Recall 2070," a new series inspired by the 1990 Arnold Schwarzenegger film. While some elements from the movie will cross over, the series will have new characters and a different premise, taking place during Mars' initial colonization. The series stars Michael Easton, and the two-hour pilot airs March 7 on Showtime. Also, Jonathan Frakes is considering whether to direct a sequel to the 1990 film.

SHORT TAKES: "South Park" creators Trey Parker and Matt Stone have applied for the now-vacant job of president of the Comedy Central cable network channel....According to reports, Warner Bros. is considering making a musical based on (get ready) "Batman"....Noted astrophysicist Stephen Hawking will guest-star on an upcoming hour-long episode of "The Simpsons"....Rumors are flying that Disney still wants a big live-action "Sailor Moon" movie, except its version has the Sailor Scouts originating from California, not Tokyo, Japan....Denise Richards ("Starship Troopers") landed the part of nuclear scientist Dr. Christmas Jones in the next James Bond film "The World is Not Enough" scheduled for a November release. ■ PS

CARTMAN Comedy Central's president?



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Write: Joe Kubert's World of Cartooning 37B Myrtle Ave., Dover, NJ 07801
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BASIC TRAINING

PHIL JIMENEZ SHOWS YOU

HOW TO DRAW BACKGROUNDS

A lot of artists hate drawing backgrounds. I'm not sure why. I *love* to draw them. I'm one of those guys known for my detailed backgrounds. When fans and editors meet me, I often hear something like, "Hey, you're the detail guy" or, "We know you can draw backgrounds, so you've got the job."

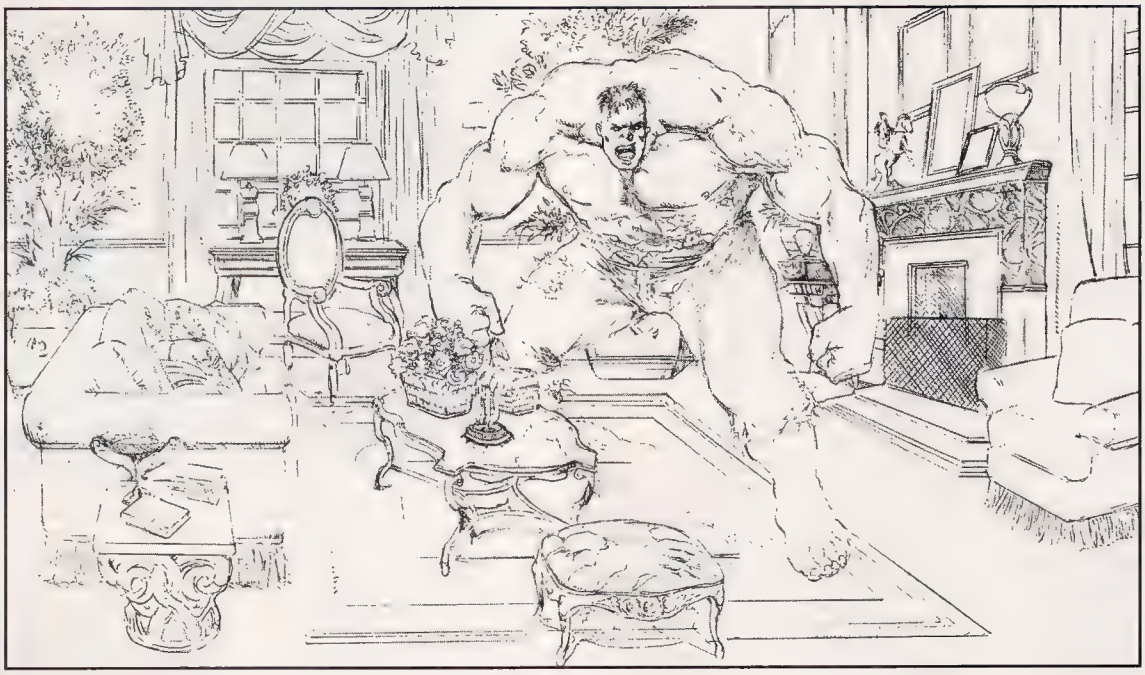
I just love drawing chairs and buildings and people and mountains and animals. If you love to draw, why wouldn't you want to draw everything you can if given the chance? I've learned a lot just by doing the research to draw these things. And now I'm going to try and give you some tips I've picked up along the way.

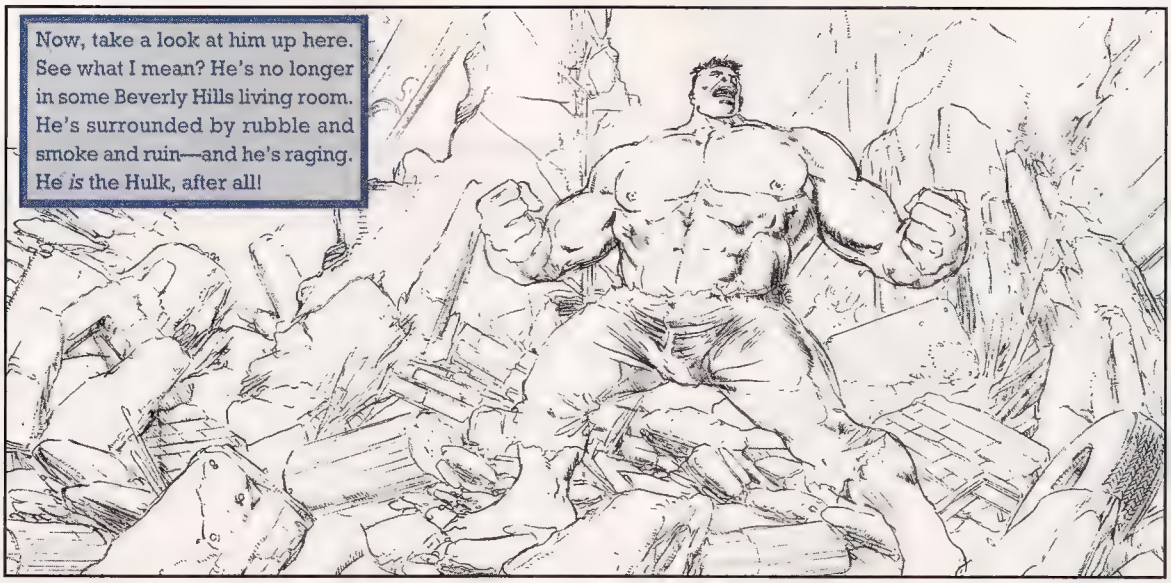
THIS MONTH'S SPECIAL INSTRUCTOR

Grounded in Reality

There's nothing quite so impressive as a splash page with a favorite character like Wolverine or Spider-Man, charging at us with speedlines dashing past our face and theirs. Like I said above, a lot of folks don't like to draw backgrounds. So before I get into the *how* of it, I'd like to touch on the *why*.

Backgrounds give a character context; they establish the type of world he lives in. They also give us an environment, a place for the character to interact. Thanks to backgrounds, we can imagine our character in a particular backdrop, at a particular size, with particular objects and climate. Take a look at the image of the Incredible Hulk, below.





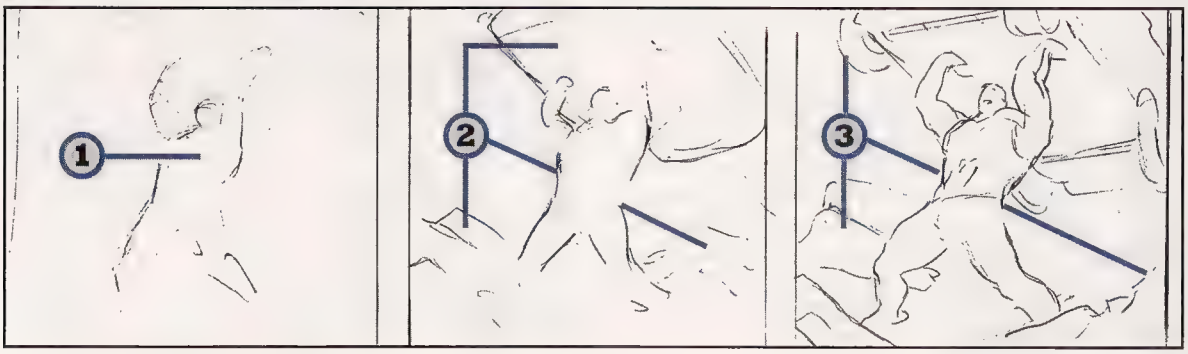
In both drawings, I've established an environment in which the Hulk can interact, and which gives us an idea of his size and demeanor (body language). In the living room, he's looking a little out of place—and I've drawn his body language to reflect that. But I've also drawn his *body* to reflect that—note his size compared to the other objects in the room. Compare that to his raging self amid the rubble above. See how when the context changes, so does he? Backgrounds help establish the world a character lives in.

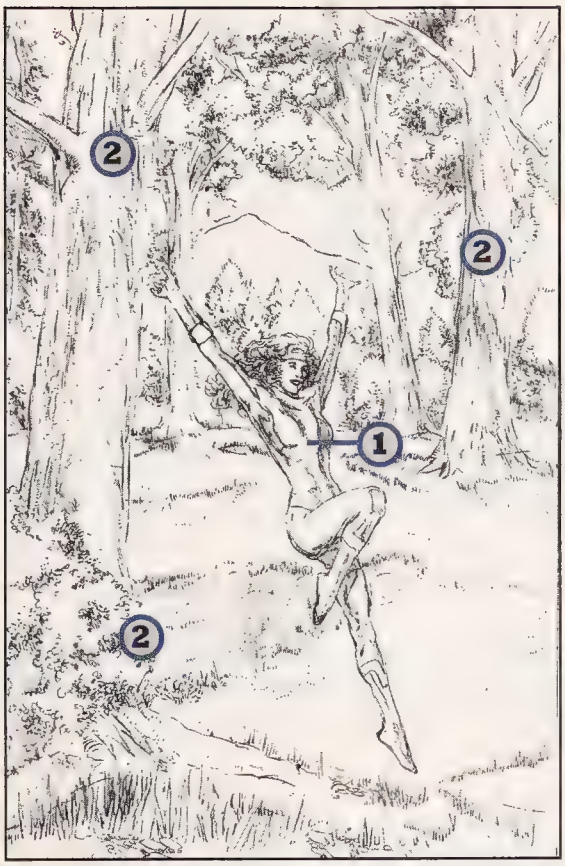
Make Reference Your Preference

Okay, so you're resigned to drawing backgrounds. So where do you begin? That's easy: reference. Reference is key. If you're drawing the Grand Canyon or New York City, you need reference to surround you so that you know what things actually look like. My best sources for reference are magazines and books—anything with photos in it—including nature, architecture and furniture magazines, books on everything from animals to castles, and even old photographs. You can find reference anywhere...and you should use it!

Lay It Down

Below is a quick look at my process. First, I establish with a loose drawing where the character's going to be (1), and in what action pose, with a slight hint of the background. Then I go in and start to add the details (2), adding more to the background elements in front and in back of the figure, remembering not to fill in the whole background, because word balloons will help with that. Once that's established, I start filling it all in (3).



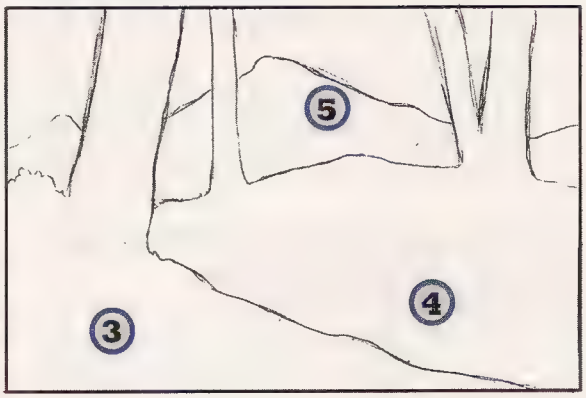


Be an Environmentalist

So here comes Rogue, flying down to enjoy some peace and quiet on a sunny day in the woods. How do I establish this environment and how do I lay it all down? Glad you asked.

First, I snag the reference. I wanted a park-like forest, so I checked my magazines and books—even animal books, because they have backgrounds, too—and found the right type of trees and grass. Whether you're drawing airplanes or grassy knolls, it's all the same. Sure, the reference might be different, but the process is the same.

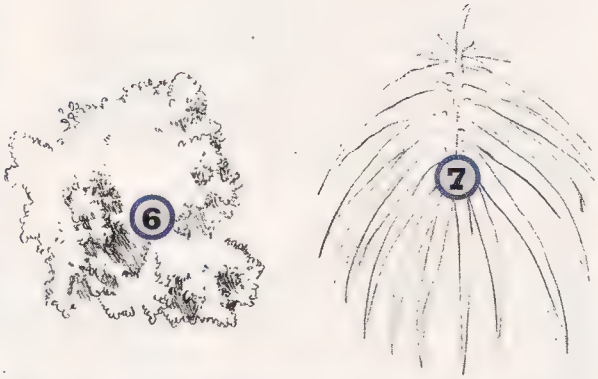
Then, I sketch in Rogue (1) while filling in the details of the trees and shrubs around her (2), keeping in mind things like light sources and shadow.



Set Design

A good way to work is to think of your characters as "actors," and the backgrounds as the "stage" or "set." There are three parts to the "set": the foreground, the middle ground and the background. These are the three planes of a background, and we use them to create a "room" for the character to act in.

The foreground (3) is the part that's "closest" to us, the viewers; it's usually in our face, almost as if we were there. Our hand could reach out and touch the foreground in some cases. The middle ground (4) is often the part where the character interacts, because it's the center and focus of the panel. The background (5) is the stuff waaaay in the back (although not always that far) that creates the far "wall" of the room the character's acting in.



Change of Scenery

You can draw a character in any environment, with any background, on any kind of set you want. That's the cool part about comics. But remember: If you change anything on the set, you change the context, and the character's behavior should change appropriately.

Check out the leaves to the right. They suggest different types of environment. The bushy leaves on the left (6) suggest a drier, more foresty kind of place. The leaves on the right are from a humid South American jungle (7).

See what happens when I draw one kind of forest and not the other (8)? The whole environment changes, and Rogue's reaction (surprise and trepidation) (9) changes appropriately. Your background will dictate how your character reacts within it.

Setting the Stage

Okay, say Robin was transported to the Old West in a time tunnel. How do we create the background (the environment) for him to work in?

First, we get the reference: books on the Old West, photo books and movie reviews on western movies from the 1920s to the '90s, anything with appropriate visual reference.

Then, we lay it all in. I sketched in Robin (1) with an appropriate shocked pose (he's from present-day Gotham City, after all). I put him in the middle ground, as our focus.

Then I started to build the scene around him. A saloon's terrace (2) is in the foreground, which helps establish where we, the viewer, are standing. Then I took several different photos and combined them to create the background (3) (the church and hotel are from two different sources).

I added a stagecoach (4) as a prop to help add some more local "flavor." Everything in your background should feel like it belongs. And you don't need to add everything and the kitchen sink—just enough to help establish the overall environment. Finally, I added people (5)—locals, dressed in time-appropriate attire—as the final, most important element of a background. After all, if heroes don't have other people to save and interact with, what's the point?

You Gotta Believe

It doesn't matter if your style is cartoony or realistic, simple or rendered. All that matters is you create a *believable* environment for your character to work in. That's all that's important. If it's a house from a child's fairy tale, a building in Metropolis, or a futuristic cityscape, it's *your* job to create a believable context in which your characters can live.

There's so much to say about backgrounds, and this barely scratches the surface. Just remember that they *are* important, comic readers like seeing them, and they help your characters (your "actors") work stronger. It's the same reason actors have an easier time with real set pieces than blue screens—they can get into their parts more easily. Whatever you do, just enjoy drawing, and *keep practicing*...it'll come to you with practice. And don't be so quick to dump those old *National Geographic* magazines in the garbage—they're the best reference!

Phil Jimenez just finished JLA/Titans, *which has a lot of backgrounds. And he loved drawing each and every one of them.*

Drawing Board

Who needs the pros? This is the show for WIZARD READERS' ART

This artwork is killer. And with good reason. In *Wizard* #87, we asked our readers to draw the motor-mouthed mercenary Deadpool as a superhero in the Mighty Marvel Universe and send the sketches in to us. Entries for the "Dress Up Deadpool!" contest poured in from all over the globe and we racked our brains to pick the best artwork.

The best entry walks away with a slew of cool Deadpool stuff, including a porcelain bust, a T-shirt, poster, a trade paperback and a bunch of funnybooks. Runner-ups also net some highly superific prizes—prizes to kill (and maybe, die) for.

Thanks to everyone who entered. You keep drawing great art and we'll have no choice but to publish it.

GRAND-PRIZE WINNER

THIS ONE CAUGHT OUR EYE

THUNDER-POOL

Rob MacKinnon, Vancouver, B.C., Canada

THE BOOTY

DEADSTORM
Sam Klein, Oslo, Norway

SIX SINISTER DEADPOOLS
Sam Chauvin, Jacksonville, Fla.

'NO-PRIZE' DEPT. Hey, this entry doesn't win a prize 'cause the contest directions called for drawing Deadpool as a MARVEL character. (Always read those directions, kiddies!) But we thought it was too funny to toss out. Enjoy!

WONDER WO-MERC
Brian England, Houston, Texas

Want your art to appear on one of these four pages in future issues? Think you've got what it takes? (Hey—quality *and* originality count, y'know.) Then send your "Drawing Board" entries to:

SUBMIT!

Drawing Board
c/o Wizard Entertainment
151 Wells Avenue
Congers, NY 10920-2064

And follow these rules or else: Use any form of unlined paper or posterboard (no larger than 8 inches by 11 1/4 inches) and any medium (oils, crayon, mustard, etc.—but not neon inks). Put your name, full address and TELEPHONE NUMBER on the back of your piece, and mail it flat to avoid damage. **You must also include a color photo of yourself.** All entries are non-returnable and become the property of Wizard Entertainment. Employees of Wizard Entertainment are the sole judges of the contests, and all decisions are final. Got it? All right, good luck!

MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS:

ART CONTEST

I'm an EARTH X Superhero!

PRIZES

GRAND PRIZE (1): One lucky Xer wins an original sketch of his entry drawn by *Earth X* series artist John Paul Leon, an *Earth X* script signed by writer Jim Krueger, an Earth X T-shirt, a copy of *Earth X #0* and the first three issues of *Earth X* signed by Leon, Bill Reinhold and Alex Ross!

SECOND PRIZE (3): Three almost-as-lucky superheroes each win *Earth X* #1 signed by John Paul Leon, Bill Reinhold and Alex Ross, a copy of *Earth X* #0 and a cool Earth X T-shirt.

Imagine if you woke up one day and found yourself in the Marvel Universe? Now imagine if when you woke up, not only were you in the Marvel Universe, but you had superhuman powers and abilities. That's the premise of *Earth X*—every person on Earth is gifted with superpowers. Well, if you want to win this contest, you're gonna have to pretend you're a resident of this *Earth X* world. What we want you to do is draw yourself as a superhero. That's it. Don't draw yourself as an existing hero—you have to create a totally new hero who looks like you! When you've drawn your super-self, give your creation a hero's name, fill out the entry form below, attach your entry and send it all in. We'll choose the most creative and cool-looking entries as the winners. And not only will you win great prizes, you'll also see your entry in an upcoming issue of *Wizard*!

Keep this in mind when you're drawing: Submissions can be on any form of unlined paper or posterboard and can be in any medium (oils, crayon, marker, etc.). Neon inks will not print. Artwork must not be larger than 8" X 11 1/4". Do not fold, bend or roll artwork. Mail flat. Also be sure to include two photos of yourself with the entry. Each photo (no Polaroids, please) should include your full name, date of birth, telephone number and address on the back.

MARVEL COMICS®

THIS MONTH'S CONTEST IS SPONSORED BY MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT AND ALL ITS FRIENDS IN TIGHTS!

THE WORLDLY TEXT

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Entertainment, Marvel Entertainment, their immediate families and Alex Ross' fat Spider-Man from the *Earth X Sketchbook*. Dude, ever heard of dieting? Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip, e-mail address and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card, and attach the form or card to your entry. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: "I'm an *Earth X* Superhero!" Art Contest, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries and all rights thereto become property of Wizard Entertainment and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by March 26, 1999.** Wizard Entertainment is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Winners will be selected based on originality and creativity by Wizard Entertainment. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Winners will be notified no later than April 30, 1999. If an entrant, having been declared as a winner, does not accept the prize or the prize or prize notification is undeliverable, another entry will be selected. In the event that a prize is not available or it becomes impossible for the sponsor to award the prize which has been designated, the sponsor retains the right to substitute a prize or product of equal value to the winner. Determination of whether a prize or product is of equal value is in the sole discretion of the sponsor. Winning entries will be selected on or about April 9, 1999.

For a list of winners, available after April 9, 1999 send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: "I'm an *Earth X* Superhero!" Art Contest Winners List, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

ENTER NOW!!

Fill this out, attach your entry and put it in an envelope. Send it to:

"I'm an Earth X Superhero!" Art Contest,
c/o Wizard Entertainment,
P.O. Box 118,
Congers, NY 10920-0118

DEADLINE IS MARCH 26, 1999.

"I'm an Earth X Superhero!" Contest Entry Form

CONTEST DEADLINE March 26, 1999!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____ E-mail Address _____

DID YOU ATTACH YOUR ENTRY AND PHOTOS?

TOY CHEST

AVENGERS ASSEMBLE!

In the format made popular by the Classic X-Team Gift Pack and this past holiday season's Giant Size X-Men Boxed Set, the Marvel Universe's greatest superteam gets the deluxe treatment from Toy Biz. **The Avengers Team Gift Pack** captures the team from its earliest appearances from the '60s, including Ant-Man, **the Hulk**, **Iron Man**, **Thor**, the Wasp and Giant-Man. These 6-inch, fully-articulated action figures each feature some nifty extras. The Wasp and Ant-Man are both 2 inches tall and are accompanied by ant sidekicks, plus Ant-Man's helmet is removable to reveal the mug of Hank Pym. Iron Man, in his early, bulky armor, also features a removable helmet, while Thor sports a fabric cape and his trusty hammer Mjolnir.

Look for this boxed set to hit toy stores in July, with the possibility of another Avengers roster, or even the Thunderbolts, getting the deluxe treatment in the near future.

ASSEMBLE THIS! Toy Biz's Avengers boxed set includes (l. to r.): Hulk, Iron Man, Thor and Giant Man with Ant-Man and the Wasp (above).

BY TOM PALMER JR.

Magic hits toys, J. Jonah Jameson...and even Aunt Beru!

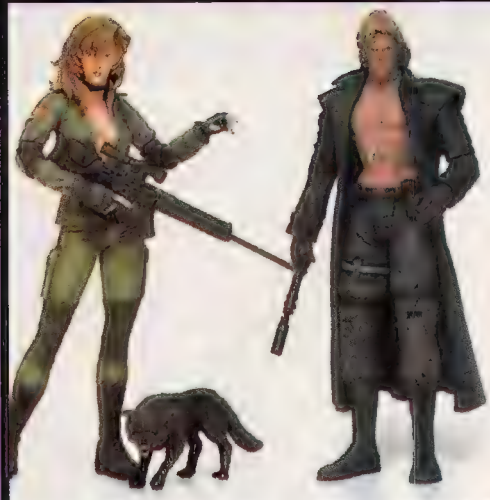
SPIDEY...AND SCARINESS!

Aside from the Avengers boxed set, Toy Biz has got a banner year for action figure fans. **Spider-Man** headlines another helping of Web-Splashers figures in April, which includes Sea Web, Hydro Float and Wet Suit Spidey as well as Aqua-Carnage. And in July fans can finally snag the **Peter Parker** figure from the canceled Street Warriors line as part of the Spider Power assortment, which also includes the first ever **J. Jonah Jameson**, **Doctor Octopus** and a new rendition of Spidey based on the drawings of **John Romita Jr.**

Also on tap from Toy Biz this spring is a host of video game-inspired action figures, including **Darkstalkers 3**, **Diddy Kong Racing** and another go-around from **Resident Evil 2**. The Darkstalkers line hits in July and includes Demitri with Lilith, Von Gerdenheim with Ghost Doctor and John Talbain with Baby Bonnie Hood. Diddy Kong Racing offers Diddy, Wizpig and Banjo, co-star of *Banjo-Kazooie*, in a line that pairs the characters with vehicles from the game. Last, but not least, Resident Evil 2 adds four new characters in May under the sub-title "Director's Cut" with William Bergen, Mister X, Ada Wong and the secret character Hunk.

WEB-SLINGIN' FUN Spidey and pals are back (clockwise from right): Doctor Octopus, a John Romita Jr.-flavored Spidey and J. Jonah Jameson. Also look for Darkstalkers 3 toys (bottom, left to right): John Talbain with Baby Bonnie Hood, Von Gerdenheim with Ghost Doctor and Demitri with Lilith.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF TOY BIZ



McFARLANE'S SOLID STATE

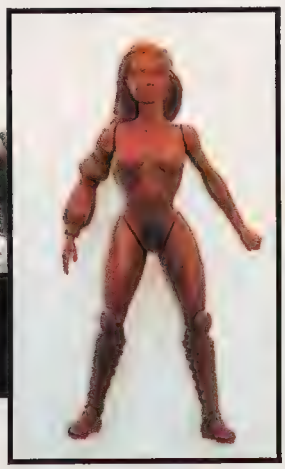
McFarlane Toys delves into the kooky world of video game action figures this February with a full line devoted to **Metal Gear Solid**. The heroic Solid Snake and all the hard-hitting allies and villains from the popular PlayStation game are here in McFarlane's usual highly-detailed style, complete with tons of accessories and nifty extras. Hero Solid Snake clocks in with a pistol, laser sight, removable silencer, rifle, gas mask, missile launcher, goggles and some explosives, while the evil Liquid Snake totes a pistol, rifle, night vision goggles and a black overcoat. But all that's nothing compared to the humongous gatling gun the Vulcan Raven figure has strapped to his back, or the interchangeable arms and heads of the Ninja figure, which also happens to sport 15 points of articulation. Other figures in the line include Meryl Silverburgh, Psycho Mantis, Sniper Wolf and Revolver Ocelot.

HEAVY METAL Solid Snake and pals hit toy stores! (Top, left to right): Sniper Wolf, Liquid Snake, Meryl Silverburgh and Solid Snake. (Bottom, left to right): Ninja, Vulcan Raven, Revolver Ocelot and Psycho Mantis.

MAGICAL MYSTERY TOYS

It's gonna be a magical year for the toymakers at ReSaurus.

With fans numbering over 6 million, it's a mystery why nobody's thought of making action figures based on the ***Magic: The Gathering*** CCG...until ReSaurus came onto the scene. The relatively new toy company has secured the toy rights to the game and is ready to unveil the first assortment of three Magic figures this March. Fans can look for the **Orgg**, **Serra Angel** and **Hurloon Minotaur**, all with authentic accessories and weapons. And if that's not enough, be on the lookout for the second helping in July with Dakkon Blackblade, Juzam Djinn and the Soldevi Golem.



FAIRIES 'N' STUFF The first wave of Magic toys from ReSaurus includes (left to right): Hurloon Minotaur, Serra Angel (unpainted) and the Orgg.

GOT MILK? Star Wars icon Aunt Beru arrives along with a trusty treadwell droid.

AUNT BERU'S HOT!

Star Wars fans' prayers have finally been answered.

Now there's an action figure of **Aunt Beru** to keep Uncle Owen company on all those cold Tatooine nights. Beru is part of the Hasbro's Power of the Force line, which will continue this year alongside toys based on "Episode 1: The Phantom Menace," and comes with a treadwell droid and trademark blue milk. She ships in the spring to complement the revamped versions of classic Wars characters like Luke Skywalker, Darth Vader and Obi-Wan Kenobi, which hit toy stores recently.

HOMEMADE HERO OF THE MONTH

THE BEST OF FAN MADE ACTION FIGURES

AGE OF APOCALYPSE

Stewart Lee Hickman Jr., Universal City, Texas

Age of Apocalypse *now*, baby!

Colossus was originally a Toy Biz Wolverine Unleashed, with accessories from a ton of other figures. Shadowcat was merely a repainted Toy Biz Ninja Psylocke with the claws from Toy Biz Wolverine Unleashed. To make Chamber, Stewart used the torso and legs from Toy Biz's Emplate, the arms from Toy Biz's original Chamber and the head from Toy Biz's Robot Fighter Gambit. And finally li'l ol' Husk was a repainted Robot Fighter Jubilee.

The creator of this month's "Homemade Heroes" selection wins a nifty Deadpool bust courtesy of Bowen Designs. Thanks, guys.

Hey!

Do you want in on the fun? To enter the homemade figure contest, send at least TWO well-lit, clear, color photographs (No Polaroids, and put 'em in cool or funny poses!), along with your name, address, a DETAILED DESCRIPTION of how you created your figure, your full phone number (including area code) and even e-mail address to:

HOMEMADE HEROES
c/o Wizard Entertainment
P.O. Box 118
Congers, NY 10920-0118

stuff

COMIC BOOK MERCHANDISE YOU CAN BUY...

By David Borak and the *Wizard* Staff

AVAILABLE AT YOUR LOCAL COMICS RETAILER

Who among us doesn't like stuff? Whether it's the epic video tape "My Dinner with the Blob," Wonder Woman's Invisible Jet polish or *The Hulk Sings the Songs of Boxcar Willie* record album, we're all suckers for comic-related merchandise. Each month, *Wizard* will strive to show you the latest and super-neatest in comic book statues, posters, pins, magnets, shirts and other goodies. In short, if it's cool, and if it's stuff, you'll find it here.

DUO DYNAMICS Porcelain heroes Batman and Nightwing are immobile, but darn imposing.

AMERICAN DREAM Make as much money as you can, then blow $2,500 of it on a bronzed Captain America.

LIBERTY IN BRONZE

Bowen Designs brings you the Captain America Bronze Statue ($2,500), guaranteed to bring out the sentinel of liberty in all of us. This statue stands approximately 12 inches tall and comes mounted on a slab of black granite with a hand-rubbed bronze finish. Each statue comes with a Certificate of Authenticity signed by Stan Lee and sculptor Randy Bowen. Look for it this month.

BAT-SCULPTURES

DC Comics presents a new Batman statue sculpted by William Paquet based on designs by artist Simon Bisley. The Batman Statue ($195) is made from cold-cast porcelain and measures 14 inches tall. Batman is featured perched atop a sculpted clock face with a Batarang in hand. It's limited to 5,000 pieces and will be available May 26.

You'll also find the Nightwing Medium Statue sculpted by Paquet based on designs by artist Scott McDaniel. This cold-cast porcelain statue features Dick Grayson as Nightwing leaping across a Blüdhaven rooftop. The statue measures 7.5" X 5" with a Nightwing nameplate on the base. Limited to 2,500 copies, this statue will be available this month.

COOKIE CROOK Pop off Catwoman's head and you can store your cookies away from thieving fingers.

COOKIE-CATCHING CATWOMAN!

Available at Warner Bros. Studio Stores, look for the cool new Catwoman cookie jar ($40)! Each jar measures 13" X 8" X 8" and features the alluring visage of Batman's curvaceous enemy, Catwoman. This glazed, full-color ceramic cookie jar will be available this month.

TREK-OPOLY

USAOPOLY presents the newest version of *Monopoly* with *The Monopoly Game: Star Trek: The Next Generation Collectors Edition* ($50). Aliens replace the traditional *Monopoly* properties, and the game pieces are collectible pewter tokens of the ST:TNG crew. Chance and Community Chest have been replaced with Captain's Log and Starfleet Orders, and houses and hotels are now starships and starbases. This is the first in a series of Star Trek editions of *Monopoly*, each representing one of four quadrants of the galaxy to be explored. Eventually, all four editions will be linked (through wormholes) and can be played as one game. Look for it in stores now or call (888) 656-7306 to place an order through USAOPOLY.

BOARDED TREK *Monopoly* Star Trek style? Set phasers to "Go to Jail, Go Directly to Jail."

BATMAN IN MOTION

DC Comics brings you the Batman: No Man's Land Lenticular Print ($99), painted by Alex Ross. Like the Superman Forever Lenticular, each black-matted set features four full-color, frameable prints (4.5" X 6.75" each) that show Batman covering himself with his famous cape. The four paintings are those featured on the cover to *Batman: No Man's Land*. The set measures 25.5" X 13" and comes with a signed autograph card and a four-color, how-to brochure on the lenticular process. The set is limited to 1,000 sets and will be released this month.

FRIGHTFUL FOUR Artist Alex Ross' creepy Batman renditions are packaged in one print.

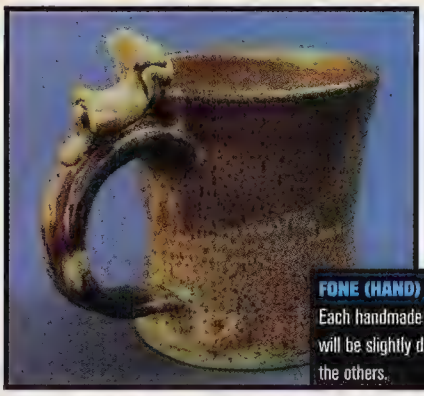
HOT STUFF!!!!!!!!

PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

A DARK SCULPTURE

Available in March, Moore Creations presents The Darkness sculpture ($199). Clayburn Moore has sculpted this cold-cast porcelain rendition of Jackie Estacado, a.k.a. The Darkness, perched on a ledge and surrounded by a host of creepy, gun-toting goblins. The sculpture is produced in 1:8 scale and comes fully painted.

DARK KNIGHT Those aren't monkeys on killer Jackie Estacado's back—they're foul-mouthed goblins.



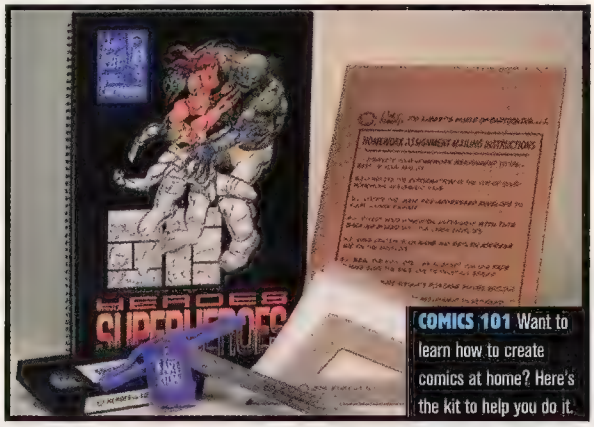
FONE (HAND) THROWN Each handmade Bone mug will be slightly different from the others.

BONE-Y MUG

Cartoon Books presents the Bone Limited Edition Hand-Crafted Mug ($24.95), designed by artist Jeff Smith. Each washable mug is individually hand-thrown by artist Lisa Bare and features a 3-D sculpture of Fone Bone reclining on the mug's handle. Each mug is 4 inches tall, but as they are handmade, individual mugs will differ. Limited to 300 pieces, the mug comes boxed and will be individually numbered and signed by Smith and Bare. Look for it this month.

COLLEGIATE COMICS

Learn to be a comic book artist with Joe Kubert's World of Cartooning Correspondence Course Kit ($325 each). There are five different courses aspiring artists can take: "Heroes and SuperHeroes," "Story Graphics," "Penciling," "Inking" and "Horror." Students receive a kit that includes a course book, art materials (pens, brushes, etc.), an instructional video, class assignments, sketching boards and envelopes to mail in completed assignments, which are then graded by instructors at Joe Kubert's school. These course kits are available now. To order one, call Joe Kubert's World of Cartooning at (973) 537-7760.



COMICS 101 Want to learn how to create comics at home? Here's the kit to help you do it.

DEATHLY LITHOGRAPHIC

This March, Chaos! Comics will unveil a limited-edition lithograph to celebrate the crossover event of the year: Lady Death and Vampirella. The Lady Death/Vampirella Lithograph ($25) is illustrated by Mike Deodato Jr. and colored by Jason Jensen. The lithograph measures 16" X 20" and is limited to 1,000 copies.

DD-SQUARED If you don't catch the reference, just stare at the Lady Death/Vampirella Lithograph—and admire the view.

MACROSS, IN MINIATURE

To celebrate the 15th anniversary of the hit Japanese cartoon "Super Dimensional Fortress Macross" (a.k.a. "Robotech") in America, Toycom will begin selling super-neat Japanese Macross vinyl toys here in the U.S. These non-poseable vinyl figures ($19.99 each) come fully assembled and painted, standing 11 or 12 inches tall. Featured characters include singer Lynn Min Mei, *SDF-1* crew member Misa Hayase (Lisa Hayes), and fighter pilot Hikaru Ichijo (Rick Hunter). Look for these puppies in toy stores everywhere right now.

ROBOTECHNICAL Vinyl ain't just for records—check out schoolgirl Lynn Min Mei and pilot Hikaru Ichijo.

Check your local stores for availability of all these funky-fresh products. Or ask your friendly neighborhood comic store to special order 'em for ya!

YO! Are you a company that sells stuff cool enough to make the grade here? Let us be the judge of that. Send any info and/or samples to:

Stuff for "Stuff"
c/o Wizard Entertainment
151 Wells Avenue
Congers, NY 10920-2064

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DREAMWAVE PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS:

CONTEST

Darkminds Hide and Seek!

PRIZES

GRAND PRIZE (1): One special agent wins a page of original Pat Lee *Darkminds* art, the complete set of eight regular *Darkminds* comics signed by Pat Lee and the *Darkminds* creative team, a copy of all the existing *Darkminds* variants signed by Pat Lee and the *Darkminds* creative team, a copy of the chromium cover *Darkminds* #1 signed by Pat Lee and the *Darkminds* creative team and a Darkminds poster.

FIRST PRIZE (2): Two homicide detectives each win a complete set of eight regular *Darkminds* comics signed by Pat Lee and the *Darkminds* creative team, a copy of all the existing *Darkminds* variants signed by Pat Lee and the *Darkminds* creative team, a copy of the chromium cover *Darkminds* #1 signed by Pat Lee and the *Darkminds* creative team and a Darkminds poster.

SECOND PRIZE (5): Five cyberpunks each win a copy of the chromium cover *Darkminds* #1 signed by Pat Lee and the *Darkminds* creative team and a Darkminds poster.

Agents Nagawa and Nakiko use their master detective skills every day to solve the toughest criminal cases the Special Investigations Unit has to offer. Now it's YOUR TURN to use your master detective skills to win some loot. Throughout the *Darkminds* series are hidden tips of the hat to some of Dreamwave Productions favorite people and companies. What you have to do is search the back alleys, secret rooms and backgrounds of each page to find the following names and logos. We've given you what to look for on the entry form below. Now, use your cunning to find the items. When you've found them all, write the issue number and page number of each clue on the entry form below and send it in. We'll choose the winners at random from all the correct entries. Get out those magnifying glasses and start searching! Remember: the first page of the story is page 1. And any ads count as a page. Don't just count the story pages!

DARK WINDS

THIS CONTEST IS SPONSORED BY DREAMWAVE PRODUCTIONS AND POLICE OFFICERS EVERYWHERE! WHAT WOULD WE DO WITHOUT YOU?

ENTER NOW!

Fill this out, and put it in an envelope.
Send it to:
"Darkminds Hide and Seek!"
c/o Wizard Entertainment,
P.O. Box 118,
Congers, NY 10920-0118

MINDLESS TEXT

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Entertainment, Dreamwave Productions, Image Comics, their immediate families and all cyborgs. It just wouldn't be fair. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip, e-mail address and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card, and attach the form or card to your entry. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: "*Darkminds* Hide and Seek!" Contest, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries and all rights relating thereto become property of Wizard Entertainment and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by March 26, 1999.** Wizard Entertainment is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or entries mutilated by the Paradox killer. Winners will be selected by random drawing by Wizard Entertainment. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Winners will be notified no later than April 30, 1999. If an entrant, having been declared as a winner, does not accept the prize or the prize or prize notification is undeliverable, another entry will be selected. In the event that a prize is not available or it becomes impossible for the sponsor to award the prize which has been designated, the sponsor retains the right to substitute a prize or product of equal value to the winner. Determination of whether a prize or product is of equal value is in the sole discretion of the sponsor. Winning entries will be selected on or about April 9, 1999.

For a list of winners, available after April 9, 1999, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: "*Darkminds* Hide and Seek!" Winners List, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

"Darkminds Hide and Seek!" Contest Entry Form

CONTEST DEADLINE MARCH 26, 1999!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

E-mail Address _____

FIND THIS STUFF! (Issue #, page #)

1. Photo of Roger Lee: _____
2. Gaiman's Bakery: _____
3. Spawn Logo: _____
4. D-Boy Logo: _____
5. WildStorm Cafe: _____
6. CPM News: _____

video STUFF

By Matthew Danish

Video killed the radio star, but who's complaining? Certainly not us. Welcome to "Video Stuff," a column where we let loose with news, previews, reviews and super-secret codes for the hottest, most spanktacular console and computer games around. Fire up the controllers...it's video game time.

SONY PLAYSTATION, TAKE TWO?

Speculation is running rampant about the development of the new Sony video game system. The as-yet-unnamed system (insiders report either PlayStation2 or PlayStation 2000 are good bets for possible names) may see release in Japan as early as March 2000 and in America during September later that year.

Published reports say the system may have the potential to produce 4.5 million polygons a second, making it 50 percent more powerful than Sega's new Dreamcast system. Rumors also have it the system may be backwards compatible, meaning players could play original PlayStation games on the new system.

NINTENDO NABS 'STAR WARS'

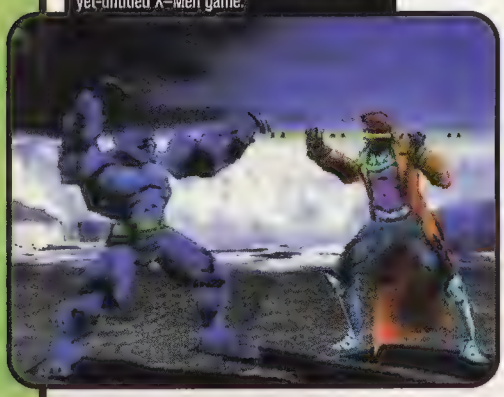
It's bigger than the explosion of the Death Star! Nintendo and LucasArts have signed an agreement that gives Nintendo exclusive rights to the lucrative Star Wars license.

As part of the deal, LucasArts is hard at work making not one, but two video games based on the upcoming Star Wars prequel, "The Phantom Menace." According to published reports, the games will contain all-new heroes and locales and will debut for the Nintendo 64. In addition, Nintendo will be producing Star Wars games for the new Game Boy Color System. Release dates have not been revealed.

ACTIVISION'S MUTANT MELEE

Activision has released early screen shots of an X-Men fighting game which will be similar in style to such notable precursors as Capcom's *X-Men vs. Street Fighter*. The game, which will be available in early 1999, includes Wolverine, Psylocke, Iceman and other comic characters in 3-D as they engage in head-to-head fighting sequences set against an Arctic background. It will also feature its own series of combo moves designed to showcase the individual fighting styles of these classic Marvel characters.

STAFF MEETING Beast and Gambit freeze their asses off fighting in the snow in the as-yet-untitled X-Men game.



SPIDER IN 64 BITS

Not ready to rest on its laurels, Activision is moving forward with its license to produce video games based on Marvel Comics. The California-based company recently announced it will be producing the first-ever 3-D Spider-Man video game for the Sony PlayStation and Nintendo 64.

Details for the new game are scarce. While the game is likely to be released in late 1999, nothing is known about the game's mechanics, its story line or villains. Screen shots for the new game are, as of press time, non-existent. ■

REEL 'RAIDER'

"TOMB RAIDER" MOVIE: FOR MORE NEWS, CHECK OUT "COMING ATTRACTIONS" ON PAGE 66.

UP AHEAD

Zelda's 'Legend' grows...Luke goes Skywalking...Lara stays clothed and more!!!

dynamic forces

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Jae Lee Cover

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THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: OCARINA OF TIME

MANUFACTURER: Nintendo
PLATFORM: Nintendo 64
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $69.99, available now

Being royalty ain't easy. Just ask Princess Zelda, who's kidnapped every three years or so. In *Ocarina of Time*, the elf-like Link sets out to rescue Zelda from the clutches of Ganondorf, the crafty villain hell-bent on subjugating the world of Hyrule.

Ocarina of Time bowls over gamers with a truly impressive game engine. Adopting a spectacular 3-D, third-person viewpoint for the first time in the *Zelda* series, the game makes phenomenal use of the controller; game players have the option of assigning any of Link's many weapons and accessories (such as the Megaton Hammer) to the directional C buttons. In addition, Link can target enemies, who range from the skeletal Stalfos to the pig-like Moblins, for attack using the Z button, a truly revolutionary feature.

Link's quest takes him across scenic landscapes, from forested plains to the blue depths of Lake Hylia. As the title suggests, time travel plays an important role, as Link must traverse between the sunny days of his youth and the more foreboding world of his adulthood using his magical, flute-like ocarina. A key element in solving many of the game's abundant puzzles is the idea of changing the past to affect the future, a concept lending richness and depth to the game's storyline.

TRY IT... If you like *Banjo-Kazooie* or any of *The Legend of Zelda* video games, you'll love *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time.*

The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time is a rewarding adventure, mixing the best elements of roleplaying games with swashbuckling, dungeon-exploring action. Throw in some new innovations (such as horseback riding) and this is one Legend for all time. ■ **Dan DiGiacomo**

TIME BANDIT Young fairy boy Link gains a fairy pal in Navi (above) and the duo take a time trip to defeat the nefarious Ganondorf.

STAR WARS: ROGUE SQUADRON

MANUFACTURER: LucasArts
PLATFORM: Nintendo 64, PC
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $49.95, available now

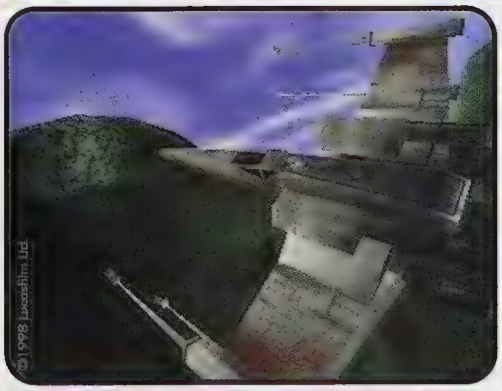
Okay, so what if *Star Wars: Rogue Squadron* is another first-person, flight-simulator, shoot-'em-before-they-shoot-you- game?

Users of this single-player game play rebel stud Luke Skywalker and lead the elite Rogue Squadron on a variety of dangerous (read: suicide) missions against the Empire, which is fomulating a dastardly plot against its foes. Players can climb into one of five different spaceships and fly against a medley of Imperial crafts and weapons (from TIE Fighters to AT-ATs) while piloting over, around and through a host of different environments. Computer-controlled wingmates are there to keep players appraised of mission objectives, but in return, a player must be wary of *their* well-being. Or else.

Star Wars: Rogue Squadron is superbly designed. The 3-D graphics illustrate the various vehicles, landscapes and other innovations, such as engine glow, speed lines, etc., to great effect. (*Rogue Squadron* is also specially designed to take advantage of the new Nintendo 64 Expansion Pak, an accessory allowing for enhanced sound and graphics!) The sprawling levels provide a Force-worthy challenge, and players can go back to completed missions to try them using a different ship.

TRY IT... If you like *Shadows of the Empire* and *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter*, put on that dorky orange flight suit and get *Star Wars: Rogue Squadron.*

Alas, *Rogue Squadron* doesn't support a multiplayer format—a disappointment, since one would think that a game with the word "squadron" in its name automatically implies some semblance of teamwork. ■ **Carmelo Caylo**



X,Y No, it's not time for stupid geometry and Cartesian coordinates. It's time to blow stuff up with X- and Y-wing fighters!

MORE→

COMICS WITH A KICK!
MEGA DRAGON AND TIGER
Survival of the fittest has never been so brutal.
SOLAR LORD
He's been holding a grudge for 63 Million Years and now it's payback time!
Jade Dynasty Comics from Hong Kong are coming at you in March from Image Comics
image

TOMB RAIDER III

MANUFACTURER: Eidos
PLATFORM: Sony PlayStation, PC
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $49.99, available now

Lovely explorer Lara Croft is back—and despite the rumors to the contrary, she's keeping her clothes on, thank you very much.

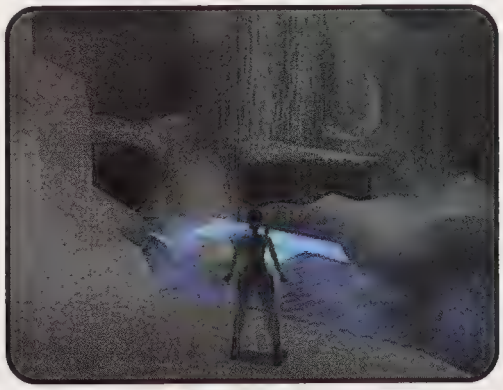
For lovers of the *Tomb Raider* series, the charismatic heroine Croft is back again climbing, swimming and jumping from ledge to ledge while collecting prizes in this third of the legendary series.

A 3-D action adventure of the highest order, this game provides hours of mindbending fun with labyrinthian levels to challenge the most hardened gamer. On one level, Lara hangs from her fingertips from a ledge while a boulder rolls straight at her. When the rock goes over the ledge, she climbs up and advances. Also, by pressing "L2," players can use Lara's new crawl feature, useful for climbing into many tight spaces that can't be accessed otherwise. Enter the game's "Area 51" stage, and Lara is confronted with a creepy scene plucked from a particularly horrific episode of "The X-Files."

TRY IT... If 3-D action adventure games such as *Jersey Devil*, *MediEvil* or *Earthworm Jim 3-D* serve as your personal flotation devices, Lara Croft will rock your world in *Tomb Raider III*.

III's player control is awkward at times. Lara's movements are more difficult to control than in previous versions, particularly the smoother first game in the series. Lara cannot turn while she's walking—she must stop before each turn. On the positive side, Lara has to call the flares up from inventory before she can light them, so they never ignite accidentally as they sometimes did in *Tomb Raider II*.

While *Tomb Raider III* has one minor drawback—awkward controls—it will satisfy lovers of the game with hours of play similar to the earlier versions. ■



BUTTINSKY With less donuts and more exercise, your tush could look like Lara Croft's. On second thought...

SPECIAL MOVES & SECRET CODES

CHEATSHEET

WINNING "WAR ZONE"

When you've body-slammed Acclaim's *WWF War Zone* (for the PlayStation and N64), it's time to take wrestling to a whole new level with these excellent hidden features.

BURP AND FART MODE

• Play through the *WWF War Zone*'s "WWF Challenge" with either Headbanger Mosh or Headbanger Thrasher (on any difficulty) to unlock this particularly gross mode.

BIG-HEAD WRESTLERS

• Beat the game in challenge mode with the British Bulldog on medium or hard difficulty. These big-headed monstrosities can then be accessed by going to the main menu screen and pressing "L1" and then "R1." This will bring a player to the "basement" where hidden characters can be accessed.

SUE, THE RING GIRL, A WRESTLER?

• Access the lovely ring girl Sue as a playable grappler by beating the game's challenge mode with Owen or Bret "The Hitman" Hart. Access this feature by pressing left on the directional pad and then the "R" button.

WRASSLIN' WOMEN

• If players beat the game on "WWF Challenge" with Hunter Hearst Helmsley or Sean Michaels, they can create their own female wrestlers in the "Create-a-Wrestler" mode.

KOMBAT KODES

Use this super technique to access a special "Cheat" menu for both the PlayStation and N64's *Mortal Kombat 4*. The hidden menu lets players turn the game's fatalities and endings on and off—and more!

• Go to the main menu and access the game's options.
• Highlight the "Continues 3" option.
• Hold the block and run buttons for 10 or so seconds until a cheat menu appears.

webline

IT CAME FROM THE WORLD WIDE WEB

www.sci.tamucc.edu/~pmichaud/toast/

If you've ever wondered how to turn an ordinary strawberry Pop Tart into a deadly weapon, this site is for you.

www.magicdragon.com/UltimateSF/SF-Index.html

A veritable and virtual sci-fi encyclopedia with over 5,000 links to SF resources.

www.perp.com/whale/

Explosions are fun and this site recounts the bittersweet tale of a beached whale and the dynamite it was blown up with.

www.psygnosis.com

An extensive Website from the makers of *Psybadek*.

www.oddworld.com

The official Website for GT Interactive's PlayStation game, *Oddworld: Abe's Exoddus*.

www.nin64.com/features/columns/default.asp

A private N64 Web page with loads of features. ■

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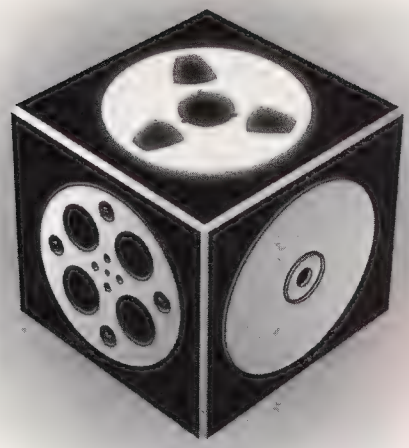

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TOP 10 HEROES & VILLAINS

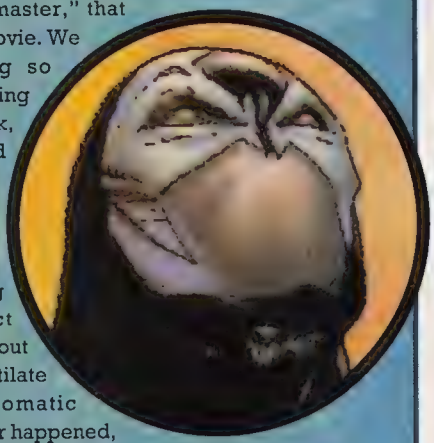
This list doesn't track the number of copies which a specific character sells each month. It doesn't pay attention to any kind of sales meter. This list is a roster of the 10 comic book characters with the strongest fan following—nothing more, nothing less.

1 WOLVERINE

For being King Badass, Wolverine sure puts up with some stupid nicknames. Like "the ol' Canucklehead," for one. Jubilee even calls him "Wolveroonie." Next time you see Wolverine walking down the street, yell, "Hey! Wolveroonie!" and then run away. Betcha he doesn't even care. If WE had retractable claws, a mutant healing factor and were prone to slip into berserker rages, WE certainly wouldn't stand for "Wolveroonie." WE would chase down whoever said it, cut off his arms and legs and stuff 'em down a drainpipe. WE would be kind of a jerk about the whole thing. WE probably wouldn't have many friends.

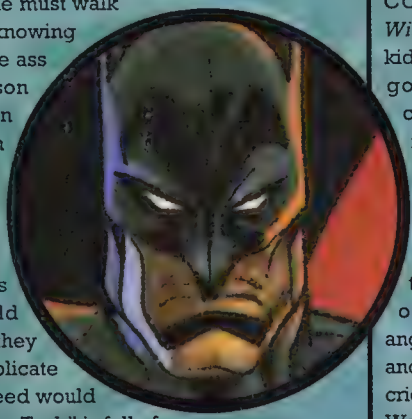
2 SPAWN

Ah, the mask of Spawn. Wouldn't any man feel heroic in such a mask? We bet Michael Jai White did when he donned the cowl for the "Spawn" movie. We bet White wasn't feeling quite so heroic when his "Spawn" follow-up turned out to be "Ringmaster," that Jerry Springer movie. We weren't feeling so heroic either, sitting through that flick, but we had a good time pretending Michael Jai White's character really WAS Spawn, waiting for the perfect moment to jump out at Jerry and ventilate him with automatic weapons. It never happened, though. We bet the real Spawny woulda done it.



3 BATMAN

Batman could pretty much kick your ass. Batman could pretty much kick ANYBODY'S ass. That's what's cool about Batman. Bruce Wayne must walk around all day long knowing that he could kick the ass of every single person he meets. But when you know you can kick everyone's ass, do you then lose the need to kick ass? Someone once said that if the replicators on "Star Trek" could replicate ships, then they wouldn't NEED to replicate ships because the need would then never arise. "Star Trek" is full of convoluted crap like that. Batman should kick all their asses.



4 WITCHBLADE

Wouldn't a funny idea for a "Saturday Night Live" sketch be some kid walking into a cutlery store? But he thinks it's a COMIC store? And he asks the clerk, "Do you have *Witchblade*?" And the clerk says, "Which blade?" And the kid goes, "Right." And the clerk goes, "What?" And the kid goes, "*Witchblade*." And the clerk...waitaminnit. This isn't funny at ALL. Why didn't someone stop us before we got this far? Now we know what it must be like to actually perform on "SNL." Lots of angry, annoyed looks and dead silence. And crickets. Lots of crickets. We're sorry. We won't do it again.

5 DAREDEVIL

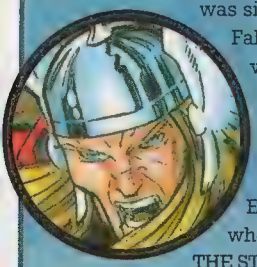
Just how damn popular is Daredevil? Well, the other night we saw the wrestler Raven wearing a DD shirt! How cool is that? He's earned it, though. Being the Man Without Fear must be a heavy burden to carry. Every time there's a huge icky spider in the shower, guess who has to whack it with a shoe? That's right. The Man Without Fear. Bullseye in the closet? Elektra in the pantry? Yep, DD's gotta go whack 'em with a shoe, too. We'd say a hero like this deserves to be on T-shirts. You should get one.

6 FATHOM

If you could ask Aspen Matthews any question in the world, what would it be? Any question at all. We'd like to think that we'd come up with some really cool, witty question blending world politics, Harold Pinter plays and Furby into one. But we'd probably take one look at her pretty li'l mug and stammer out, "Umm...don't you h-hate it when your fingertips get all wrinkly underwater?" Nope, it's safe to say we won't be scoring any points with Fathom-baby. Arrgh! Wrinkly fingertips? Stupid, stupid, stupid...!

7 THOR

At one point, legend holds, there was gonna be a "Thor" cartoon starring the voice of the dreamy megahunk Fabio. This was silly for more'n one reason. After all, Fabio's major selling point sure ain't his voice. Our choice for Thor's voice actor would be that crazy J. Peterman guy from "Seinfeld." Actually, to play Thor, you just crank up the reverb and say things as though Heaven and Earth will open up and swallow anyone who doesn't obey you. "PLEASE PASS THE STEAK SAUCE." Believe us, they will.

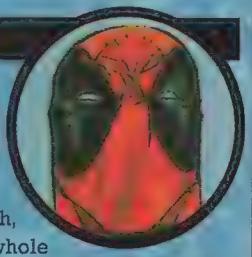


8 PREACHER

Mom always wanted us to grow up and be a preacher, but not THIS kind of preacher. This kind of preacher smokes and drinks and beats people up and has a hot girlfriend named Tulip. He fights some crazy one-legged, one-eyed sociopath named Herr Starr. He cruises around in a nifty convertible. He uses the Word of God to make people do whatever he wants. His best friend is a vampire. Come to think of it, this is exactly the kind of preacher WE want to be.

9 DEADPOOL

In the 1980s, the biggest Deadpool was "The Dead Pool," starring Clint Eastwood, Jim Carrey and Guns 'n' Roses. In the 1990s, the biggest Deadpool is...well, Deadpool, the Merc-with-a-Mouth, the fast-talking assassin in the whole wide world, with a face like ground chuck and a mouth you want to staple shut. We think this is pretty irrefutable proof that we are all very lucky that the '80s are gone forever. Viva the '90s! Viva Deadpool! Viva the fact that Cabbage Patch Kids rule our children with an iron fist no longer! Whoops, nowadays we have that Furby thing. Never mind.



10 SILENT BOB

Is he a hero? Villain? It depends on your point of view. Elderly ladies and 14-year-old kids probably view overweight, trenchcoat-wearing, chain-smoking, pothead deviants in very different lights. But hero or villain, ol' Silent Bob is certainly popular. He's the star of the hot title *Jay and Silent Bob*, written by film and comics superstar Kevin Smith, after all. Hey, wait a sec—Silent Bob IS Kevin Smith! What gives? Kevin Smith made HIMSELF a mega-popular comics character? Forget Preacher—we wanna be Kevin Smith.

MORT OF THE MONTH

ONE LAME ASS CHARACTER

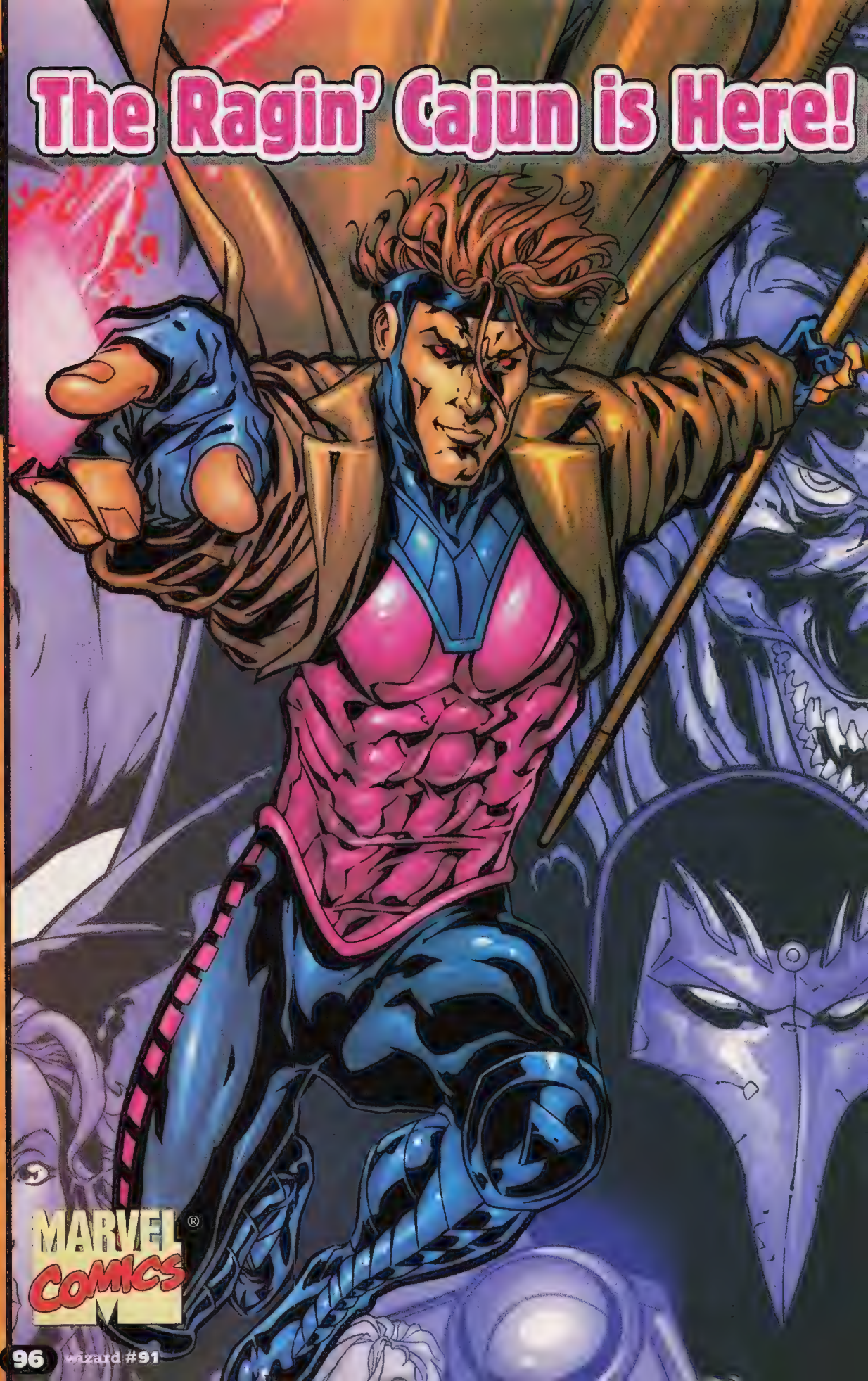
THE CALCULATOR

All dastardly supervillains make plans. But the Calculator is the only jamoke we know of who plans to FAIL. Yep, that's his master plot for world domination. He's suckered superheroes like Batman, Green Arrow and Hawkman into beating his sorry ass, so the mathematical genius can then input data from their battles into the giant calculator on his chest. Once these calculations are in place, he can never be defeated by the same hero twice! Somehow, this doesn't seem like the brightest plan in the world.

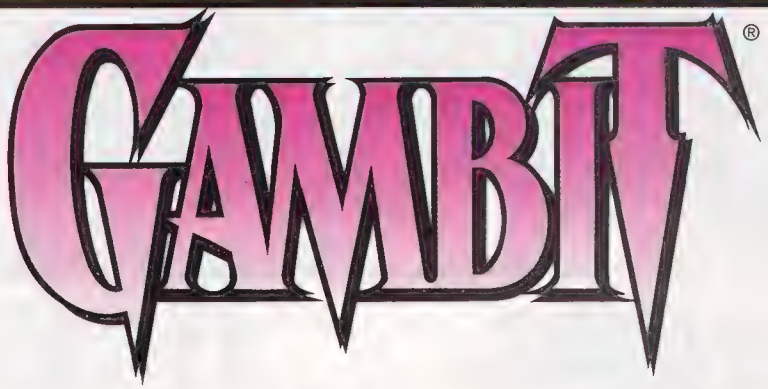
Don't most supervillains try to AVOID getting their asses kicked? Dude, you can get your ass kicked plenty good without the help of a giant calculator. Oh, and it's not as though there's not another very big downside to all those losses, too. This moron's scheduled to be in prison until he's 330 years old.

MORTOMETER

The Ragin' Cajun is Here!



WIZARD #1/2 OFFER



So what happened to Gambit after he was stranded in Antarctica back in *Uncanny X-Men* #350? Find out here in this exclusive prequel to the all-new ongoing *Gambit* series. Remy LeBeau's mysterious benefactor has sent him on a mission to steal an object of power from the Savage Land, but to reach his goal, Gambit's got to deal with dinosaurs, mutated insects and even an evil invader within his own body! Then things really get complicated when the Cajun X-Man discovers that the object he's been sent to retrieve is a human being!

There's only one way to find out who is worth risking life and limb for and that's by filling out the order form, enclosing $3 and putting it into the mail. Don't hesitate or you'll miss the opportunity of a lifetime! Order now!

Within the Gambit #1/2, you'll find these hidden treasures:

- A brand-new story written by Fabian Nicieza with art by Pascual Ferry and Bob Wiacek!
- The answer to the question you've been wondering about for far too long: What happened to Gambit after *Uncanny X-Men* #350!
- A prequel story to the brand-new Marvel ongoing *Gambit* series!
- Behind-the-scenes sketchbook art!
- And the spiciest morsel of all—this is a Gambit story you won't find anywhere else! This exclusive comic is available through this one-time *Wizard* offer only!

A comic this great won't last long. Get your order in today!

RAGIN' LEGAL TEXT

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BEHOLD!

THEY'RE MAD, I TELL YOU!

THE MUST-READ COMICS SHIPPING IN FEBRUARY

book of the month

THUNDERBOLTS #25

MARVEL The T-Bolts, Marvel's villains-turned-heroes, take on the new Masters of Evil! "But one Thunderbolt," writer Kurt Busiek warns, "may go back to the dark side. And we won't (Think: "Moonstone") say who (Moonstone) that is (Moonstone)." Plus, the MoE's leader, the Crimson Cowl, gets unmasked. And Busiek promises that reading *Thunderbolts* #25 will make your teeth whiter and build strong bodies nine different ways. He offers this guarantee: "If it doesn't, Marvel will let you be the next company president!" By Busiek, Mark Bagley and Scott Hanna. **$2.99.**

AKIKO #32

SIRIUS Fifth-grade go-getter Akiko and her space pals from planet Smoo have their first adventure on Earth. It seems there's a malfunction as the crew tries to blast off, and their ship crash-lands in rural Japan. "It's the start of a new story, the perfect issue for readers to jump on board—so get off your butts!" exclaims creator Mark Crilley. The locals who stumble across Akiko and pals speak only Japanese, so Japanese-American Akiko—who speaks just enough Japanese to screw up a few translations—will act as interpreter, adding to the wacky hijinks. But can *Akiko* #32 whiten teeth and build strong bodies? "Not only that," Crilley promises, "but it will also teach you a word or two in Japanese." By Crilley. **$2.50**

AVENGERS #15

MARVEL It's reunion time as Iron Man, who had to take a few issues off with an extreme case of "Damn, but I got my ass kicked," returns to active duty. And the full team delves into the origins of Triathlon, the superpowered goon who helped out in *Avengers* #8. By Kurt Busiek, George Pérez and Al Vey. **$1.99**

AVENGERS FOREVER #5 (OF 12)

MARVEL Slap leather, ya jaspers! Immortus, nasty master of time and cheese puffs, is using time-travel to rub out Avengers faster than a cowpoke can get saddle sores! Ridin' to the rescue? Ol' West hero and honorary Avenger the Two-Gun Kid. Draw! By Kurt Busiek, Roger Stern, Carlos Pacheco and Jesus Moreno. **$2.99**

BATMAN BOOKS

DC COMICS Post-earthquake Gotham City is fit for no man as "No Man's Land" continues. Batman tries to break the Penguin's grip on the city in *Batman: Legends of Dark Knight* #116. A new Batgirl (!) pops up in *Batman: Shadow of Bat* #84, and takes center stage in *Batman* #564, while Batman, Batgirl and Oracle take on the Cult of the Black Mask in *Detective Comics* #731. By Ian Edgington and D'Israeli (*Legends* and *Shadow*) and Greg Rucka and Frank Teran (*Batman* and *'Tec*). **$1.99 each**

BATTLE CHASERS #6

CLIFFHANGER/DC COMICS Hey! It's been four months since this book was originally listed, but what the

MR TITLES DENOTED WITH AN MR CONTAIN MATERIAL THAT'S SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS.

Hell—this time it'll be out for sure! Gully, the littlest 'Chaser of 'em all, finds out more about her mighty gauntlets of power and more about her missing—and presumed dead—father. By Munier Sharrieff, Joe Madureira and Tom McWeeney. **$2.50**

BOX OFFICE POISON #13

ANTARCTIC PRESS Sherman, our luckless, dead-end-job main character, heads out for a night of heavy drinking with old college buddy James and comic artist Ed. But the trio get a bit too tipsy and start revealing deep, dark—and embarrassing—secrets. By Alex Robinson, all by his lonesome. **MR $2.99**

DANGER GIRL #5

CLIFFHANGER/DC COMICS Sucks to be a Team Danger Girl member these days: One operative is captured, one is missing, and one sure looks...dead. So it's Secret Agent Zero to the rescue! "Zero is the mysterious guy alluded to in earlier issues," creator J. Scott Campbell says. "He teams up with Abbey Chase to find the last of the three artifacts the team has been searching for." The only problem? The artifact is in the rotting hull of a World War II-era Nazi sub at the bottom of the ocean! But does *Danger Girl* whiten teeth and build strong bodies nine different ways? "Of course," Campbell says. "Every issue does. If it sells, I'm all over it." By Andy Hartnell, Campbell and Alex Garner. **$2.50**

DAREDEVIL #6

MARVEL Daredevil chases some bad guys up a high-rise office building, but with each level he goes up, he actually *descends* deeper into another level of Hell. Huh? Sounds like the elevator's out of order. By Kevin Smith, Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti. **$2.50**

AVENGERS FOREVER #5

newreleases

FIRST TIME OUT

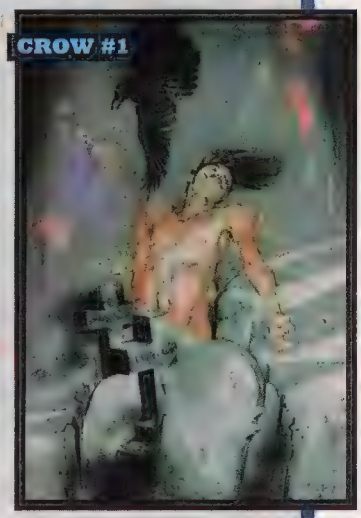
AVENGELYN (Awesome) The sword-swingin' Awesome avenging angel Avengelyne arrives! Alliteration abounds! **$2.50**

BATMAN & SUPERMAN: WORLD'S FINEST #1 (DC Comics) What a long, strange trip it's been: Ten years of Batman/Superman interplay (no, that's not a dirty word) is played out here. **$4.95**

BODY DOUBLES #1 (DC Comics) The two too-sexy bounty hunters from the pages of Resurrection Man get their own mini-skirts...er...mini-series, that is. **$2.50**

CONJURORS #1 (DC Comics) It's "Elseworlds" time as Deadman and the Challengers of the Unknown try to stop other-dimensional baddies from siphoning off the Earth's mystical energies. **$2.95**

CROW #1 (Todd McFarlane Productions/Image) Eric Draven flies again as the Crow in this new, ongoing comic series. **$2.50**


CROW #1

DC UNIVERSE VILLAINS SECRET FILES #1 (DC Comics, duh!) Immortal badass Vandal Savage takes center stage in this peek behind the DC villains' curtain. **$4.95**

EARTH X #1 (Marvel) It's here! Alex Ross' vision of a possible future for the Marvel Universe has finally arrived! Bring popcorn! **$2.99**

GEN[13] WIRED (WildStorm/DC Comics) Gen[13] mentor John Lynch works too hard and starts going buggy in this out-of-continuity one-shot. Wimp. **$2.50**

HOURMAN #1 (DC Comics) Back from the future! Hourman is an android from the 853rd century trying to adapt to 20th century life. His tour guide: JLA mascot Snapper Carr. **$2.50**

HULK #1 (Marvel) RRAARGH! Hulk smash into new #1 issue! Hulk go "on the road" just like in the "Incredible Hulk" TV series! Hulk get blisters on feet from all the walking! RRAARGH! **$2.99**

HUMAN TARGET #1 (Vertigo/DC Comics) Christopher Chance impersonates high-profile celebrities marked for assassination as the Human Target. Hey, it beats writing "Picks" for a living. **$2.95**

LADY DEATH/VAMPIRELLA: DARK HEARTS (Chaos!) Holy mammaries, Batman! It's Chaos!'s first-ever inter-company crossover when Vampirella invades Lady Death's domain: Hell! **$3.50**

MEGATON MAN: HARDCOPY #1 (Image) Woo! Megaton Man fights the Tomb Team! Yarn Man takes on Irving, the Living Cactus! We can't make this stuff up! **$2.95**

STONE #1 (Avalon/Image) Famed TV actor and reluctant hero Gerry Alan returns to action as the mythological champion, Stone. **$2.50**

TENTH: BLACK EMBRACE #1 (Image) The Tenth has gone savage and is goin' after his only true friend...the lovely Esperanza. **$2.95**

TICK & ARTHUR #1 (New England Comics) Spoon! Everyone's favorite blue buffoon (that's the Tick) takes on an unemployed ninja. **$3.50**

VAMPIRELLA/LADY DEATH #1 (Harris) Proving that one bad turn deserves another, Lady Death invades Vampi's home planet: Drakulon! **$3.50**

GREEN LANTERN #111

DC COMICS Whoa! Regular Green Lantern Kyle Rayner picked the *perfect* time to head into outer space and party with space babes! It seems Fatality, the villainous Green Lantern killer, is looking to add a couple of notches to her belt. And all she can find are pinch-hit GL Jade and former Lantern-guy John Stewart. By Ron Marz, Darryl Banks and Terry Austin. **$1.99**

GRENDEL: BLACK, WHITE & RED #4 (OF 4)

DARK HORSE Criminal mastermind and sadistic genius Hunter Rose—that's "Grendel" to you, pal—hits his favorite haunt (New York) to wreak some havoc. Five separate tales are written by Matt Wagner, with art by a bountiful bevy of artists including Jason Pearson and Chris Sprouse. **$3.95**

HELLBLAZER #136

VERTIGO/DC COMICS John Constantine, working-class mage and consumer of much Guinness Stout, is looking for revenge on the guys who slabbed out (that's "killed," kiddies) his old girlfriend, Isabelle. Now, well-hidden in the depths of London's Underworld, Constantine's ready to spring his trap. By Warren Ellis and John Higgins. **MR $2.50**

HITMAN #36

DC COMICS Don't family reunions just suck? They sure do if you're Tommy Monaghan, the Hitman. It seems he just found out he's *not* an orphan like he always thought. But now Frances, his long-lost sister, has some tales to tell Tommy, including the one of how dad murdered mom. Family values are provided by Garth Ennis, John McCrea and Garry Leach. **$2.50**

INHUMANS #6 (OF 12)

MARVEL A human military strikeforce has penetrated the secret city of Attilan and only Black Bolt can save the Inhuman race. But will he? "Like all previous issues, this one has a theme," writer Paul Jenkins says. "This one is, 'What do you do if you have power, but are powerless to do anything?' All the rest of the Inhumans are questioning Black Bolt. They know he has the power. Why can't he take on a few simple monkey-boys? But of course, Black Bolt can't answer them." It's tough-choice time in a comic that Jenkins promises *will* whiten teeth and build strong bodies. "It's also the first comic that stays crunchy in milk." By Jenkins and Jae Lee. **$2.99**

INVISIBLES (VOL. 3) #12 (OF 12)

VERTIGO/DC COMICS Hi. This is really *Invisibles* (vol. 3) #1. But because writer Grant Morrison likes to be different and because you can cash in big on millennium fever, *Invisibles* is counting backwards from #12 to #1 this go-'round. In this ish, the time-displaced Ragged Robin goes back to the future to save the team's bacon. By Morrison and Philip Bond. And *Invisibles* newcomers can get in on the old action with *The Invisibles: Counting to None* paperback, reprinting (vol. 2) #5-#13. **MR $2.95—#12; $19.95—*Counting to None***

IRON MAN #15

MARVEL Iron Man is still chillin' in Seattle, sippin' a latte and wonderin' why it rains there every day and if it's gonna make his armor rust when Nitro attacks! Nitro blows stuff up real good. Things are gonna go boom. By Kurt Busiek, Roger Stern, Sean Chen and Larry Stucker. **$1.99**

JLA #28

DC COMICS Shazam! Captain Marvel guest stars to lend Superman and the JLA a helping hand as those loud neighbors from the fifth dimension are in the middle of a war that spills over into our three-dimensional universe. One more time with these loud parties and we call the cops. By Grant Morrison, Howard Porter and John Dell. **$1.99**

JONAH HEX: SHADOWS WEST #3 (OF 3)

VERTIGO/DC COMICS Jonah Hex, the rootinist, tootinist, shootinist gunslinger of the ol' West, has it out with a midget sure-shot named Long Tom. If Hex don't win this one, people are gonna be teasin' him 'bout it for a looooong time. By Joe R. Lansdale, Timothy Truman and Sam Glanzman, pardner. **MR $2.95**

LEAGUE OF EXTRAORDINARY GENTLEMEN #2 (OF 6)

WILDSTORM/DC COMICS The band of late-19th century literary heroes-turned-comic book heroes that includes Captain Nemo, the Invisible Man and Sherlock Holmes recruits its newest member: A certain brusque gentleman by the name of Mr. Hyde. By Alan Moore and Kevin O'Neill. **$2.95**

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NIGHTWING #30

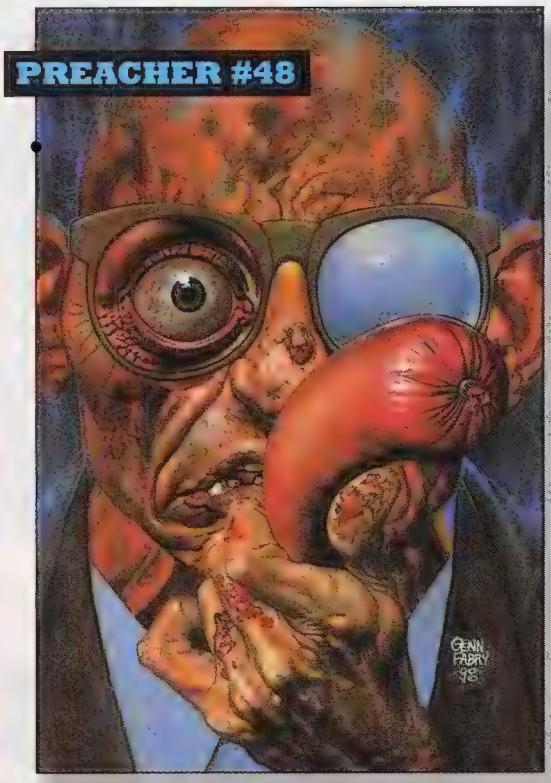
DC COMICS Say you're a bad guy in Gotham City when the place gets leveled by a 53-on-the-Richter-scale earthquake. Where do ya go? Blüdhaven! The town's got a umlaut over the "u" and there's only one spindly little chicken-legged hero (name o' "Nightwing") protectin' the place. Until this issue, that is, when Superman shows up. Suddenly those relocation plans ain't lookin' so smart. By Chuck Dixon, Scott McDaniel and Karl Story. **$1.99**

PLANETARY #1

WILDSTORM/DC COMICS The secret history of superheroes is discovered when Planetary, a team of "mystery archaeologists," unearths evidence of 100 years of prior superhuman activity and the damage it caused. And while the focus is on mystery, writer Warren Ellis promises, "*Planetary* is really all about rediscovering the roots of the superhero genre; rediscovering what made everyone interested in superhero stories in the first place." Ellis also certifies that "*Planetary* will make your teeth gleam and your primary sexual characteristics wither, blacken and drop off. And yet the book is so good, you won't miss them." By Ellis and John Cassaday. **$2.50**

PREACHER #48

VERTIGO/DC COMICS Preacher Jesse Custer, now the sheriff of Salvation, Texas, reaches the climax of his battle with an evil meat-packing magnate. But when the dust—and assorted pig parts—clears, will Jesse remain in Salvation? By Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon. Oh, yeah. The *Preacher: War in the Sun* paperback reprinting #34-#40 is also available this month. It's better than a Chia Pet. **MR $2.50—#48; $14.95—*War in the Sun*.**



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MORE BOOKS TO GET

CAPTAIN AMERICA BOOKS (Marvel) Cap deals with the mystery of his missing shield and the Red Skull in *Captain America* #16. Meanwhile, it's a swingin' '70s flashback tale of Cap and the Falcon in *Captain America: Sentinel of Liberty* #8. **$1.99 each**

DARKNESS #22 (Top Cow/Image) Darkness-dude Jackie Estacado tracks his longtime friend Jenny back to her hometown, where evil is afoot. **$2.50**

DOCTOR STRANGE #3 (Marvel) Marvel's Master of the Mystic Arts takes on evil flying babies. No, really. **$2.99**

FANTASTIC FOUR #16 (Marvel) Much like Will Robinson, the FF are lost in space. Much like *Battle Chasers* deadlines, they're lost in time. And now they're takin' on the alien Kree. **$1.99**

FLASH BOOKS (DC Comics) Flash Wally West travels to the 25th century in *Flash* #147, while over in *Flash 80-Page Giant* #2, it's more future stuff as *Kingdom's* Kid Flash appears. ***Flash*–$1.99; *80-Page*–$4.95**

GAMBIT #3 (Marvel) Dis Cajun X-Man Gambit, he track down the Courier, see? But de Mengo Brothers, dey try to spike his gumbo and kill him dead. **$1.99**

SPAWN #83 (Todd McFarlane Productions/Image) Jason Wynn, the man who ordered Spawny-Guy Al Simmons killed, is back. And he's still a jerk. **$1.95**

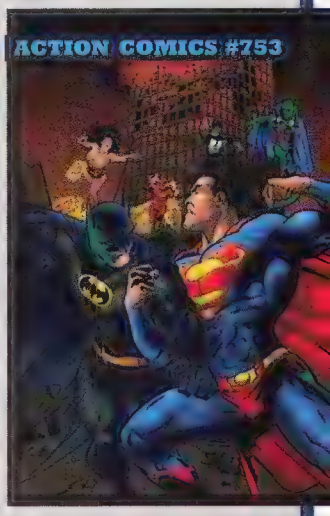
SPIDER-GIRL #7 (Marvel) It's "The Last Days of Spider-Man!" Flash back and see how Peter Parker lost his leg and retired from being Spider-Man! **$1.99**

SPIDER-MAN BOOKS (Marvel) The Fantastic and Frightful Fours both pop up in *Amazing Spider-Man* #4. Meanwhile, in *Peter Parker: Spider-Man* #4, X-Man Marrow puts in a guest appearance. And in *Spider-Man: Chapter One* #6, Spidey meets Electro for the first time...again. **$1.99 each; $2.50–*Chapter One* #6**

STAR WARS BOOKS (Dark Horse) Ki-Adi-Mundi, card-carrying Jedi Knight, tries to hold his homeworld together in *Star Wars* #3. Darth Vader's hired goons track everyone's favorite bounty hunter in *Boba Fett–Enemy of the Empire* #2. Darth Vader tries to discover who blew up the first Death Star in *Vader's Quest* #1. Here's a clue, bucket-head: IT WAS YOUR SON! And in *The Empire Strikes Back–Manga* #3, the movie adaptation continues, but this time everyone's got big eyes and speed lines. **$2.95 each; *Star Wars* #3–$2.50; *Manga* #3–$9.95**

SUPERBOY #61 (DC Comics) It's Hypertime! Superboy investigates a dead Superboy found on the moon. **$1.99**

SUPERMAN BOOKS (DC Comics) Supes topples a badass dictator's regime in *Superman* #143. Then Big Blue decides to take down arch-nemesis Lex Luthor once and for all in *Adventures of Superman* #566. Sick of Supes' rash actions, the JLA decides to kick Superman's Kryptonian ass in *Action Comics* #753. And in *Superman: The Man of Tomorrow* #13, the JLA battle continues as the Man of Steel calls in an army of Superman robots. **$1.99 each**



WITCHBLADE #30 (Top Cow/Image) Gasp! The secret connection between police captain Joe Siry and all-purpose villain Kenneth Irons is revealed. **$2.50**

WOLVERINE #137 (Marvel) The Starjammers guest star as Wolverine tries bustin' outta an alien prison planet. **$1.99**

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ROBIN #63

DC COMICS Say you're Robin in Gotham City when the place gets leveled by a 53-on-the-Richter-scale earthquake. Where do ya go? Keystone City! But when tough-asses like the Riddler and Captain...*tee-hee!*...Captain...*heh, heh*...Captain Boomerang start—Hah!—plaguing the city, the Flash and Superman (Him again?!) have to pitch in to help out. By Chuck Dixon, Staz Johnson and Stan Woch. **$1.99**

SAVAGE DRAGON #58

IMAGE Dragon died about eight issues ago. For the last five issues, he's been inhabiting the body of his buddy, William Jonson. Don'tcha think it's about time he gets back in his own body? Hmm...could be. By Erik Larsen, who's tired of drawing a buffed-up William Jonson with a cape. **$2.50**

SLINGERS #5

MARVEL Secrets are revealed and Spider-Man even makes a guest appearance as we finally find out *why* the Golden Age hero known as the Black Marvel assembled Dusk, Hornet, Prodigy and Ricochet to become the Slingers. "The team realizes Black Marvel *didn't* recruit them for the noble purposes they thought," writer Joseph Harris says. "But Prodigy—who seems to be the guy kids love to hate—can make a sacrifice to set everything right." That's all well and good. But can *Slingers* #5 make your teeth whiter? "Only if you chew the pages," according to Harris. "I think they bleach the paper." By Harris, Chriscross and Rob Stull. **$1.99**

SUPERMAN ADVENTURES #30

DC COMICS Whoa, Nellie! As if adjusting to Daylight Savings Time wasn't bad enough, Supes returns from a mission in space and is shocked to find that he's been gone for an *entire year*! Since his life as Clark Kent is in shambles, will he just return to space? Only Mark Millar, Aluir Amancio and Terry Austin know for sure. **$1.99**

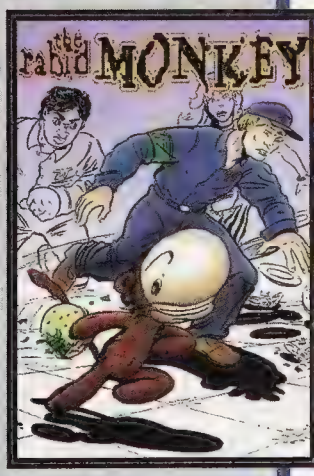
SAVAGE DRAGON #58

on the edge

OFF THE BEATEN PATH

RABID MONKEY (VOL. 2) #1

DREAMRIDERS WORKSHOP Make sure you've got your shots, 'cause Rabid Monkey is in da house! Our furry champion of all things just and all things foamy-at-the-mouth has been captured by scientists looking to slice him, dice him and turn him into mutilated monkey meat. But RM pulls off a daring escape and makes it to the airport, where wacky hijinks ensue in flagrant violation of Federal Aviation Administration regulations. Go, Monkey, go! **$2.95**



THOR #10

MARVEL Hammer-slammer Thor hits high gear in "War on Asgard," Part 1 (of 3). "We've been building to *this* story," says writer Dan Jurgens. "Who are the Dark Gods controlling Asgard? Who is the mysterious Marnot?" Answers come as Thor reaches Asgard, but has to take on an army of Dark Gods, *each* as powerful as Thor himself! It's a feast for the senses, *and* Jurgens promises *Thor* #10, "will make your teeth whiter and your bones stronger. Thou shalt be celebrated and praised throughout the land!" By Jurgens, John Romita Jr. and Klaus Janson. **$1.99**

TITANS #2

DC COMICS Take a break, already! Superman speeds into *Titans* to make 14 (No lie!) DC appearances this month. Why's the Man of Steel here? Seems the Titans are goin' after the all-new and all-deadly H.I.V.E. and Supes doesn't think they've got the stuff. Nightwing thinks he's wrong...and he's gonna prove it. By Devin K. Grayson, Mark Buckingham and Wade Von Grawbadger. **$2.50**

TRANSMETROPOLITAN #20

VERTIGO/DC COMICS "The New Scum," Part 2 (of 6). The election for president is, at long last and most mercifully, over. Only problem for rogue journalist Spider Jerusalem? The wrong guy won, and the new Prez starts exacting his revenge on a certain pesky columnist. By Warren Ellis, Darick Robertson and Rodney Ramos. **MR $2.50**

UNCANNY X-MEN #367

MARVEL Shocking! Magneto's latest plans for world domination and free beer are sabotaged, and he unleashes a massive electromagnetic storm across the globe! The X-Men? They're too busy battlin' Magneto's Acolytes to do anything about it. By Alan Davis, Fabian Nicieza, Leinil Yu and Tim Townsend. **$1.99**

USAGI YOJIMBO #27

DARK HORSE Only a rabbit has the guile to slide between two X-Men books in this listing! Usagi Yojimbo (Japanese for "rabbit bodyguard," just ask Mark Crilley of *Akiko* fame) solves a hair-raising (Or is that hare-raising?) series of murders in this tale (Or is that tail?) by writer/artist Stan Sakai. **$2.95**

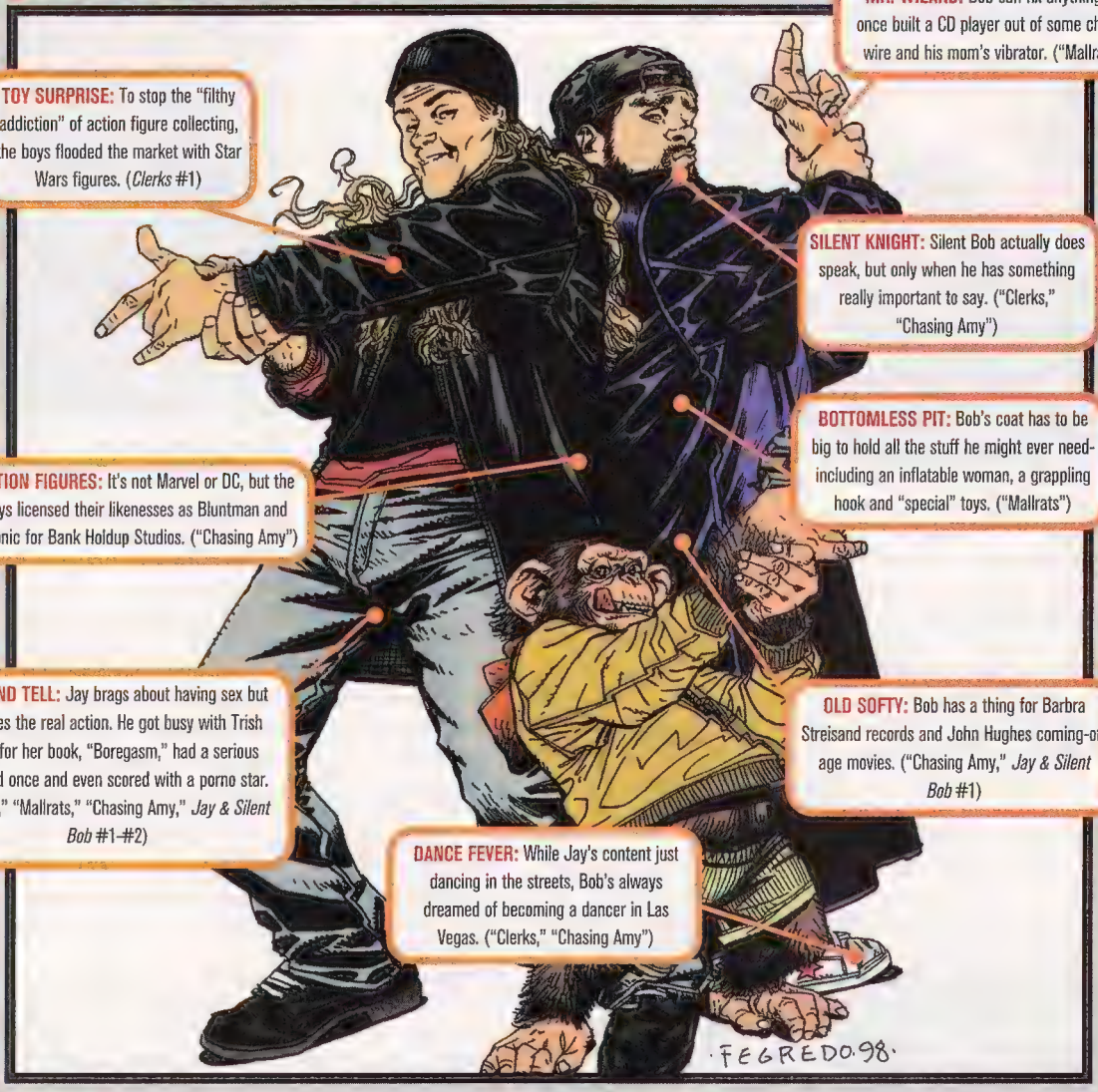
X-MEN #87

MARVEL It's grudge match time! Magneto and Professor Xavier, who have been rivals since dirt was new, square off! And Maggy also has to take some licks from a fuzzy Canadian who he stole some adamantium from once. The guy's name is "Wolverine." You may have heard of him. By Alan Davis, Fabian Nicieza and Mark Farmer. **$1.99** (W)

characterprofile

RAP SHEET

JAY AND SILENT BOB



MR. WIZARD: Bob can fix anything. He once built a CD player out of some chicken wire and his mom's vibrator. ("Mallrats")

TOY SURPRISE: To stop the "filthy addiction" of action figure collecting, the boys flooded the market with Star Wars figures. (*Clerks* #1)

SILENT KNIGHT: Silent Bob actually does speak, but only when he has something really important to say. ("Clerks," "Chasing Amy")

BOTTOMLESS PIT: Bob's coat has to be big to hold all the stuff he might ever need-including an inflatable woman, a grappling hook and "special" toys. ("Mallrats")

ACTION FIGURES: It's not Marvel or DC, but the boys licensed their likenesses as Bluntman and Chronic for Bank Holdup Studios. ("Chasing Amy")

KISS AND TELL: Jay brags about having sex but Bob sees the real action. He got busy with Trish Jones for her book, "Boregasm," had a serious girlfriend once and even scored with a porno star. ("Clerks," "Mallrats," "Chasing Amy," *Jay & Silent Bob* #1-#2)

OLD SOFTY: Bob has a thing for Barbra Streisand records and John Hughes coming-of-age movies. ("Chasing Amy," *Jay & Silent Bob* #1)

DANCE FEVER: While Jay's content just dancing in the streets, Bob's always dreamed of becoming a dancer in Las Vegas. ("Clerks," "Chasing Amy")

ORIGIN

Jay and Silent Bob are the brainchildren of writer/director/actor Kevin Smith, who first unleashed them on an innocent public in 1995's acclaimed comedy film "Clerks." To the casual passerby they appear to be essentially just a couple of suburban drug dealers content on living life from day to day, smoking a little weed and enjoying the occasional party here and there. On further inspection, however...well, okay, no one's really inspecting them further. They're funny. Let's not over-analyze the phenomenon, okay?

NOW APPEARING

After a brief appearance in Oni Press' *Clerks Holiday Special*, the four-issue *Jay & Silent Bob* mini-series should wrap in early 1999, allowing the boys to once again grace the silver screen. This time they play prophets in "Dogma," a film that picks up where the mini-series leaves off. If you can't wait for another appearance, however, you can sometimes catch their real-life counterparts Kevin Smith and Jason Mewes working at their comic shop Jay & Silent Bob's Secret Stash in Red Bank, New Jersey.

REPORT card

COMIC BOOK REVIEWS

BY *WIZARD* EDITORS BRIAN CUNNINGHAM, ANDREW KARDON AND MIKE SEARLE

MUTANT X

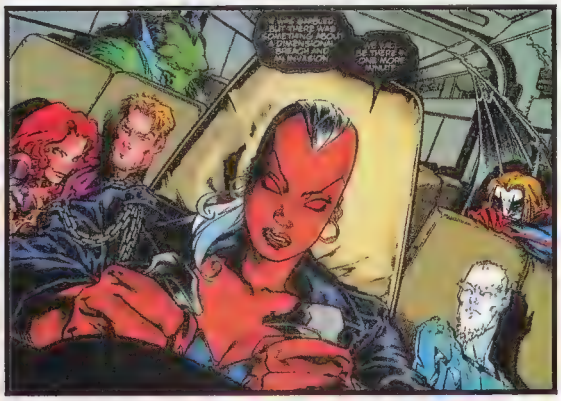
Wreaking havoc with reality

ISSUES REVIEWED: #1-#5
GENRE: Superhero action/adventure
PUBLISHER: Marvel Comics
CREATIVE TEAM: Howard Mackie, Tom Raney, Cary Nord and Andrew Pepoy
PRICE/FREQUENCY: $1.99/Monthly

What You Need to Know: Alex Summers, a.k.a. Havok, has his soul mysteriously transferred from our world to an alternate reality. Now he finds himself allied with a mutant superhero group known as The Six, comprised of parallel versions of his former friends, including Madelyne Pryor as Marvel Woman, Storm as Bloodstorm, Beast as The Brute, Bobby Drake as Ice-Man and Angel as The Fallen.

The Good: *Mutant X* makes us antsy each issue to find out what spin this reality has on our favorite X-characters. From Bloodstorm's eerie vampiric powers and attitude to a six-armed Spider-Man (issue #5) to the wild tribe of Wolverine, Sabretooth and Wildchild known as the Pack (#3), there are a lot of clever concepts any X-fan can enjoy. Even concepts we've seen before such as a dim-witted Beast and an overpowered Iceman are handled well; we like the Brute's childlike personality and amphibian look, and when we find out just touching the new Ice-Man will kill you (#1), it's neat.

X-Men continuity freaks'll love this book. This reality has been shaped by actual past X-stories—except in *Mutant X* they didn't all have a happy ending. Ice-Man never gains control of his powers after Loki's tampering (seen way back in *Thor* #377-#378); Bloodstorm is bitten by Dracula and turned into a vampire (*Uncanny X-Men* #159); The Fallen's transformed into a dark version of himself by Apocalypse (*X-Factor* #18-#24). And the backstory's full of surprising twists—Canada's at war with America and the original Alpha Flight is still the top Canadian super-team, Sue Storm and Alex Summers have some sort of past relationship and Forge is Bloodstorm's lover and "blood donor."



The Bad: So far, the plot *is* the concept. Other than a few story hints here and there, the plot has been little more than Alex trying to convince everyone he's not the Summers they know. We'd like to see a little more and it seems like the book's going in the right direction with issue #5's emphasis on Pryor and the Fallen's treacherous acts.

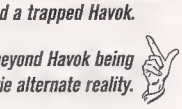
Another problem: the series has the same inherent flaws as shows such as "Star Trek: Voyager" and "Gilligan's Island." You're rooting for Alex to get home, but if he does, the series is over. On the other hand, if he never returns, the tension which holds the story together will most likely fade.

The Buzz: For a brand-new launch, it's already blasted into the top 20. Howard Mackie, who also writes the Spidey books, has fans talking.

The Skinny: *Mutant X*'s reality bites—and that's why we love it. Even though we've seen the parallel universe bit a million times—"The Days of Future Past," "Age of Apocalypse," etc.—this comic gives us a fun and surprisingly twisted approach to the same old reality. ■

Mutant X's twisted reality includes a vampire Storm, a freezer-burnt Ice-Man, a darker Angel, a dim-witted, amphibian Beast, a Maddie Pryor who never died and a trapped Havok.

We hope the plot of Mutant X expands beyond Havok being trapped in an eerie alternate reality.



THE GRADE: B

THE INCREDIBLE HULK

Mind over matter

ISSUES REVIEWED: #468-#473
GENRE: Superhero action/adventure
PUBLISHER: Marvel Comics
CREATIVE TEAM: Joe Casey, Javier Pulido, Ed McGuinness, Larry Mahlstedt and Nathan Massengill
PRICE/FREQUENCY: $1.99/Monthly

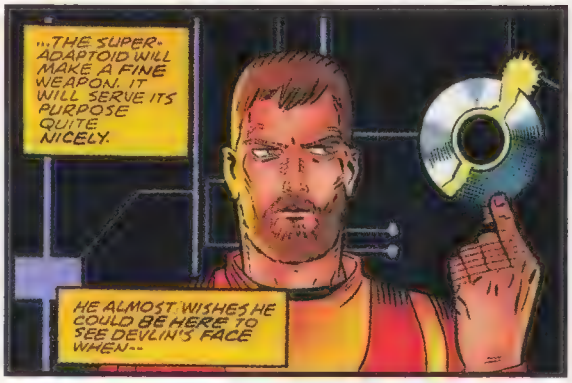
What You Need to Know: Caught in the heart of a gamma bomb explosion, scientist Bruce Banner was transformed into a powerful creature called the Hulk. Now, he spends his days searching for the killer of his wife Betty, while running from her obsessed father Gen. Thaddeus "Thunderbolt" Ross, who blames Banner for her death.

The Good: This is the best Bruce Banner we've ever seen. No longer just a whiny, wimpy character, Bruce catapults himself into the Reed Richards class of Marvel's super-geniuses, using his keen mind to uncover the identity of his wife's killer. For example, he analyzes blood samples in two hours, when it would've taken the other scientists weeks (#468). In issue #469, Bruce memorizes every detail of a labyrinth-like facility he's held prisoner in.

But even with his tremendous intellect, Bruce can't find Betty's killer. What's interesting is the readers actually know more than Bruce; destroyed evidence reveals Emil Blonsky (The Abomination) is somehow involved. The mystery really picks up by #472, when the Abomination enters the picture.

Hulk also has a great sense of humor. Whether it's a little kid playing with Captain America and Iron Man action figures while singing the old Marvel cartoon theme songs (#469) or a "Do Not Feed Hulk" sign placed on a caged Banner (#471), *Hulk* never takes itself too seriously.

The villains in this book are also a hoot. Previously pathetic, the Super-Adaptoid, the Ringmaster and his Circus of Crime are played as cool bad guys! Hearing the story through the Clown's perspective, readers gain an entertaining insight on these circus-themed villains. And the Ringmaster's powers have thankfully been updated; no longer does he use his "hypnotic hat"—instead, his eyes are surgically altered to produce a hypnotizing effect.



The Bad: We don't know the Hulk's deal these days. Smart? Dumb? Angry? He's had countless incarnations over the years and we don't know which one we're dealing with here. He seems to have some intelligence and compassion, but he very rarely says more than a few words.

But one thing we're sure of—the story where the Hulk joins the alien Qnax on a space mission (#472-#473) is ridiculous. Thanks to a "thought-travel" machine they end up on a planet with cute alien critters. Bottom line: Hulk in space doesn't work.

Finally, the art may be a big turnoff for fans. While the Circus of Crime storyline (#470-#471) was appropriately cartoony, the other issues have a very simplistic, retro Jack Kirby style to them.

The Buzz: Unfortunately, Casey's short *Hulk* run has the distinction of being bookended by a decade-long run written by Peter David and the February relaunch of the title by John Byrne and Ron Garney.

The Skinny: Although we're confused as to which Hulk incarnation we're reading, Banner has never been better, lame villains have been legitimized and the book's sense of humor has left us laughing. ■

Casey's Bruce Banner oozes a confident intelligence—it's the best take on him we've ever seen.

We're never sure which version of Hulk we're reading. Smart? Dumb? A new one?

THE GRADE: B+

SUPERGIRL

Angels, lesbians and Nazis...oh my!

ISSUES REVIEWED: #21-#28
GENRE: Superhero action/adventure
PUBLISHER: DC Comics
CREATIVE TEAM: Peter David, Leonard Kirk and Robin Riggs
PRICE/FREQUENCY: $1.99/Monthly

What You Need to Know: Based in the small town of Leesburg, the shapeshifting synthetic being known as Supergirl has merged with the mind and body of misguided teen Linda Danvers in order to save Linda's life. Now with a pair of fiery wings, it seems Supergirl is one of three "Earth-born" angels here to protect the righteous from evil.

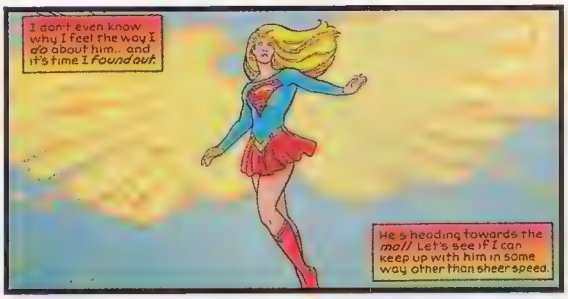
The Good: *Supergirl* is a smart book. There's some fascinating takes on moral and social issues such as lesbianism, racism and freedom of speech. When a racist speaker comes to town, Supergirl protects his freedom of speech, while Steel challenges her and her stance (issue #23). Even better is the fallout from Supergirl's actions—the media labels her a racist, while the Ku Klux Klan and the Nazi party endorse her.

Regardless of her label, Supergirl's a real likable character. With a down-to-earth personality, and a moral center (as seen in the above example), she does what's right, regardless of any repercussions.

This book's got some neat surprises and cliffhangers. Supergirl learns the horse-like hero Comet, who she has a crush on, is really Linda's lesbian friend Andy (which sorta clouds the issue of Supergirl's sexual preference). The subplot with the "Piranha Killer," made of a protoplasm similar to the type Supergirl's made of, only intensifies when he's seen right outside Linda's house in #26.

The Bad: New readers jumping into this series will have a lot of questions. What's Supergirl's deal? What are her powers? What's with the silly fiery wings? While the latter question is the current mystery running through the series, the others are necessary story points never clearly laid out for the reader, not even in a simple "What You Need to Know" box.

Almost as annoying is the amount of hokiness. For



starters, Comet was a severely injured jockey genetically mixed with horse DNA; this origin gets worse when readers learn that he and Andy mysteriously merge when they die resting next to each other. Then there's the silly, multi-issue storyline involving the rock group called the "Space Girls," blatantly based on Britain's Spice Girls.

Just as hokey are the villains, who don't seem appropriate for a hero of Supergirl's class: the possessed Resurrection Man (#24), the bizarre freaks from the Stable (#22) and then Granny Goodness and the Fighting Furies (#27). Let's pit some *real* villains against our "Super" heroine.

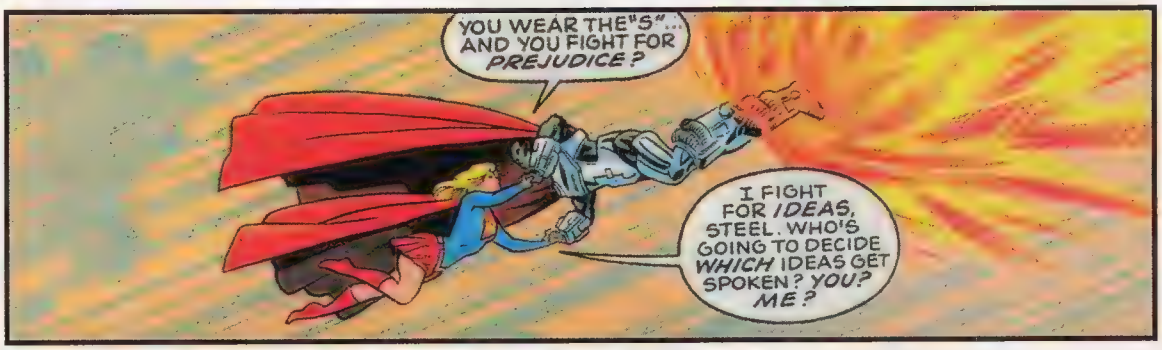
The Buzz: Look for the "Earth-born" angels storyline to continue in 1999 as the third and final angel is revealed—this time as an evil force.

The Skinny: We really dig the social challenges being thrust at Supergirl, but all the other stuff (the "Earth-born" angel gig, hokey elements and lame-o villains) makes us question who our main character really is. (W)

Uhh, since when is Supergirl some sort of angel with fiery wings?

The moral and social issues in Supergirl, *such as public racism vs. freedom of speech in issue #23, always provoke thought.*

THE GRADE: C+



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MIND GAMES

Manga-esque 'Darkminds' serves up a chilling neo-future–and a creepy serial killer

The year is 2032. Macropolis is a five-mile-high bustling burg of seven million, a city plagued by a series of gruesome and seemingly random murders. Each death could easily be dismissed as an accident or a suicide were it not for the strange symbol left on the bodies or at the murder scenes—the calling card of the twisted murderer known as the Paradox Killer.

The agent put on the case is a cynical, bespectacled cop named Tedashi Nagawa. He's a lone wolf teamed with beautiful Agent Akane Nakiko, a cyborg with psionic talents. Naturally, it isn't long before Nagawa and Nakiko are drawn into a war waged by cops, biker gangs and shadowy corporate leaders. Nagawa is framed for the Paradox murders and Nakiko becomes aware of a past life she doesn't remember.

Pat Lee and Adrian Tsang are the duo behind *Darkminds*, an Image Comics series drawn in a manga style. "There's not enough out there to satisfy the anime/manga fan," says Lee, explaining why they went the manga route. "Lots of people like [Masamune Shirow's] *Ghost in the Shell* style, so our goal is to give a similar experience; similar, but not a rip-off." *Darkminds*, set in a world of cyborg cops, street gangs, psionics and towering cityscapes, definitely evokes the dystopian settings of manga greats such as Masamune Shirow's Newport City from *Dominion* or Katsuhiro Otomo's Neo-Tokyo from *Akira*, for example.

Lee and Tsang do a great job of creating a detailed world heavy with atmosphere, bathing each scene in the baleful but muted glow of neon lights and computer screens. "We definitely went for atmosphere," Lee says. "Our future is very grim and dark, partly because most of the scenes are set at night, [but also by design]." Using a palette of purples and dark greens gives the comic an appropriately claustrophobic "Blade Runner" look, but now without cost. Otherwise intricate and expertly-rendered urban scenes are often buried under the gloom, and some action scenes—such as the climax of issue #4—are downright difficult to track due to the unrelenting parade of nearly-black panels.

DARK KNIGHTS, BIG CITY The evil Paradox Killer is on the loose and it's up to our intrepid heroes to put him on ice.

Despite the beautiful art, *Darkminds* has some story problems. The various twists and turns of the plot are painfully familiar to fans of action movies: the walk-on buddy learns "The Big Secret" and is killed; a cop is framed and must clear himself of a crime while on the run, and so on. It would have been refreshing if Lee and Tsang had taken the opportunity to stand a few clichés on their heads, but alas, no.

The creators often tell the readers what the characters are feeling rather than showing them—a major mistake

BY PAUL SUDLOW

in a visual medium. Don't *tell* the reader in little green boxes that a character is suffering mental anguish. *Show* it, either through action or dialogue. Brief "subtitles" introducing new locales, characters and acronyms, while *de rigueur* in techno-thrillers ranging from Tom Clancy movies to Shirow manga, are best kept unobtrusive and short. In *Darkminds*, narrative boxes occasionally run a whole paragraph. It doesn't help that they're in small reverse type and difficult to read.

A cardinal rule of creative writing is to avoid giving your main characters similar-sounding names like Ned and Nancy, Allan and Alexis, or Nagawa and Nakiko. Even in a visual medium where characters can be seen it's a bad idea—why borrow trouble by potentially confusing readers?

Darkminds is an interesting experiment, but American manga fans have been weaned on the best creators Japan has to offer and they have high expectations of a comic cast in a manga mold. Perhaps it's unfair to compare *Darkminds* to *Akira* or *Ghost in the Shell*, but since all comics cost money, the manga cyberpunk fan is probably better off spending his dough on the real thing.

Darkminds is presented in two, eight-issue series. There will also be two supplemental issues detailing the history of Nagawa and Nakiko. *Darkminds* is $2.50 an issue.

Freelance writer Paul Sudlow is still *trying to download the "Star Wars" trailer off the Internet.*

ANIME PICK

ANIME FILM OF THE MONTH

Fushigi Yûgi: The Universe of the Four Gods

(Pioneer Entertainment, 100 minutes, $24.98 dubbed or $29.98 subtitled)

When schoolgirls Miaka and Yui open an ancient tome, they are transported into a magical realm reminiscent of ancient China. Yui returns to Tokyo, but winsome Miaka is trapped. She soon discovers she is the key to an ancient prophesy which will save the kingdom and allow her to go home.

Fushigi Yûgi—titled *The Mysterious Play* on the dubbed version—has a cast of memorable characters and an intriguing story. While Miaka and her guardians face some serious threats, the story is leavened with a good mix of comedy and keeps things from getting too heavy. This first tape contains the first four episodes of the "Fushigi Yûgi" TV series, and serves to set the stage for the action to come. ■ PS

MANGA PICKS

MUST-READ JAPANESE COMICS SHIPPING IN FEBRUARY

Sailor Moon #5

MIXX ENTERTAINMENT

Naoko Takeuchi's Sailor saga continues. Bunny (alternately known as Usagi or Serena) has disappeared along with Sailor Venus right in the middle of the climactic battle with Queen Metallia. The evil Queen has captured the soul of Prince Endymion (a.k.a. Tuxedo Mask), and he is now her slave. Will Bunny and her friends be forced to destroy him, or can the power of love and justice free him of the enemy's curse? **$2.95**

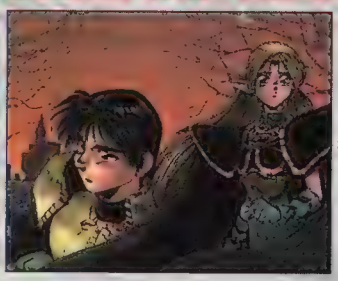
Maison Ikkoku Volume 11 TP: Student Affairs

VIZ COMMUNICATIONS

In Rumiko Takahashi's light comedy *Maison Ikkoku*, Godai—the hapless graduate in search of a career—always has his hands full. High-school siren Yagumi still has her sights set on Godai, and tricks him into being her tutor. He's lost another job, which makes his goal of wedding his landlord Kyoko even more remote. And worst of all, his wealthy arch-rival Mitaka has cleared away all obstacles and is once again courting Kyoko as well! **$16.95**

Lodoss War: The Grey Witch #4

CPM COMICS



The foreplay is over and the time has come for battle—the Grey Witch has unleashed her hoards of goblins and ghouls upon the land. As her armies blacken the hills of Lodoss Island, our band of heroes Parn, Deedlit, Ghim and Slayn gird themselves for war. Can they fend off the first wave of the Witch's horrible army, or is the land doomed? Art and story is by Ryo Mizuno and Yoshihiko Ochi. **$2.95**

Gunsmith Cats: Goldie vs. Misty trade paperback

DARK HORSE COMICS

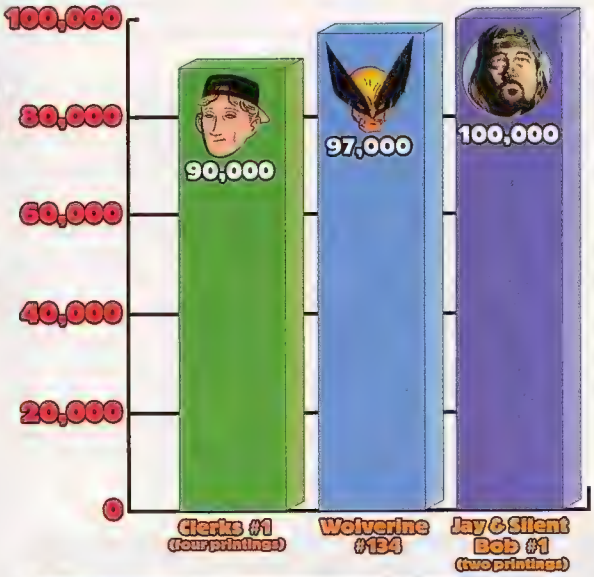
Cat burglar Misty has just gotten out of jail and she's already in trouble. She's got the goods on the Mafia don of Chicago, and now she's on his hit list. It looks like certain doom for the gal when the deadly Italian assassin Goldie takes the job, but Misty's got an ace up her sleeve—bounty hunter Rally Vincent and her young partner Minny-May, who've got enough firepower between them to take out all of Chicago! This title is for mature readers. **$12.95** ■ PS

COMIC MARKET NEWS AND SUCH by Lars Pearson

MARKET WATCH

SMITH & ROSS: MARKET JUGGERNAUTS

'Clerks' creator and 'Peace' painter hike sales



SECOND HELPING Initial orders have been low for Kevin Smith-written Oni books. But add in later printings and they go toe-to-toe with *Wolverine*.

The Writer Without Fear. The Artist of Steel. Every time they touch pen to paper, readers stand in line for their work.

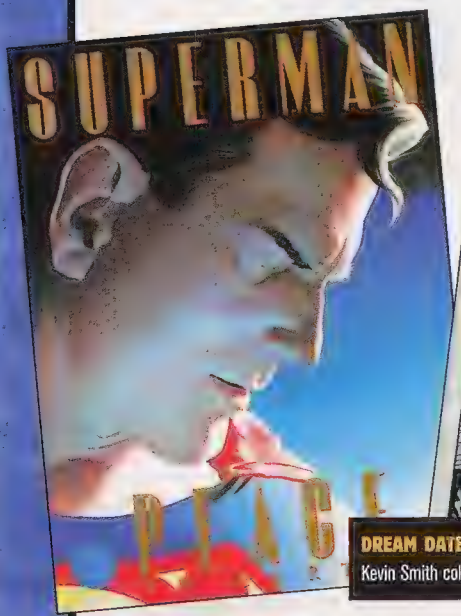
Such is the story of *Daredevil* scribe Kevin Smith and *Superman: Peace on Earth* artist Alex Ross. Even if you're as blind as Matt Murdock, you can't ignore how the market pull of this duo gets bigger every month.

Smith: Writer Without Fear

Nine issues. At press time, Kevin Smith had only published nine (!) comics, but each book by the writer and director of the "Clerks" movie trilogy has been a secondary market bombshell. Need examples?

It's only five months old, but Smith's *Daredevil* #1 is already valued at $8, and some starved collectors are even paying up to $15 for a copy. It's got so much heat, even a January *Daredevil* trade paperback (reprinting #1-#3) hasn't stopped price hikes.

And in an amazing break with tradition, massive reprinting hasn't slowed the value of a first-print *Clerks* #1, which just hit $16. And the beat goes on. Smith's December *Clerks Holiday Special* ranked No. 65 on Diamond Distribution's sales chart, a record for publisher Oni Press, and a sign that Smith's still gaining new readers.



DREAM DATE! Don't expect to see Alex Ross and Kevin Smith collaborate.

Ross: Artist of Steel

His amazing, photo-realistic paint work takes time to complete, but Alex Ross inevitably rocks the market with every new project.

Do the math: November's Ross-illustrated *Superman: Peace on Earth* sold 80,000 copies at $10 a pop. And the *Crisis on Infinite Earths* slipcase edition, sporting a cover Ross painted over George Pérez pencils, sold 10,000 copies as a $100 item. Put 'em together

and that's an insane $1.8-million-dollar gross for *one month*!

Back issues? The sleepers are awaking. Ross' first comic work, Now Comics' *Terminator: The Burning Earth*, is finally starting to move, and interest is growing in his low-printed *Hellraiser* #17.

A Smith/Ross Dream Team?

Dear God, imagine the shock waves if writer Smith and painter Ross collaborated on the same book! It's an idea so simple, it's almost idiotic nobody's tried it before.

But don't hold your breath waiting.

Ross admits he's not the biggest Smith fan, and the problem lies in Marvel Publisher Stan Lee's cameo role in the Smith-written film, "Mallrats." According to Ross, "In 'Mallrats,' he gave Stan Lee an opportunity to say he was the sole creator of Spider-Man, the Fantastic Four and all that. It really irked me that [long-time Marvel artist] Jack Kirby was not included in there."

Smith claims no animosity toward Ross, and says the only problem is one Ross has with *him*. As to the lack of Kirby's name in "Mallrats," Smith says, "Can you imagine? It's a movie, for the love of God! And Alex mistook it for real life! Do I like Alex Ross' work? Yes. Do I think he's talented? Yes. Do I think he needs to be less of a flag-waving fanboy and more of a rational individual? Yes."

Unfortunately for many fans—and whatever publisher might have sold the book—a Smith/Ross pairing looks very unlikely.

CRISIS FOR 'CRISIS'

Worlds lived, worlds died. And with November's *Crisis* recall, fans are *still* reeling.

The long-anticipated *Crisis on Infinite Earths* hardcover, reprinting the continuity-changing, 1985 DC maxi-series, has finally arrived. Well, mostly.

Due to a printing error—one panel being placed on the same page twice—DC is recalling the expensive *Crisis* collection. By the time the error was detected, most initial orders for the product had already shipped. So DC has offered to replace and resew a correct page into all volumes returned via retailers, paying all shipping costs.

But as always, hawk-like collec-

PHOTOS: BUSIEK, KELLY, SMITH, DAVID, ADAM RUGERT, JIM LEE, MADUREIRA, MARZ, ROSS, TURNER, WAID, QUESADA, LARSEN BY PAUL SCHIRALDI; MORRISON BY BOB MARTIN; PÉREZ BY BOB SMITH; JURICENIC, JAE LEE BY WIZARD; CAMPBELL BY JOHN W. MCDONOUGH

TOP 10 CREATORS

FAN FAVORITES

These are the creators the fans crave. Creators whose name on a cover sells the book. *Wizard's* Top Ten Creators lists are derived from a nationwide retailer survey. Artists include pencilers and painters.

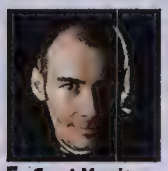
WRITERS

1. Mark Waid
Captain America, Kingdom

2. Kevin Smith
Clerks, Daredevil

3. Kurt Busiek
Iron Man, Avengers

4. Garth Ennis
Preacher, Hitman



5. Grant Morrison
JLA, The Invisibles

6. Joe Kelly
Deadpool

7. Dan Jurgens
Thor, Superman

8. Erik Larsen
Wolverine, Savage Dragon

9. Ron Marz
Green Lantern

10. Peter David
Supergirl, Young Justice

ARTISTS

1. Michael Turner
Fathom

2. Joe Madureira
Battle Chasers

3. Alex Ross
Earth X

4. J. Scott Campbell
Danger Girl

5. George Pérez
Avengers

6. Adam Kubert
X-Men

7. Joe Quesada
Daredevil, Ash

8. Jim Lee
Divine Right

9. Jae Lee
Inhumans

10. Humberto Ramos
Crimson

BURIED TREASURE

KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR THIS

PROPHET #9

There's already Stan Lee, Jim Lee and Jae Lee. Now it's time to add one Mr. Pat Lee, creator of Image's red-hot *Darkminds*, into the "Lee" pantheon. And his first comics work? It's here in 1994's *Prophet* #9.

Yes, the same *Prophet* #9 that's been rotting in quarter-bin Hell for years. But *Darkminds* #1 (and hence, Pat Lee's stock) is up again this month to $10. And Lee just signed on at Marvel for a high-profile *Punisher/Wolverine* mini-series. Many fans out there in readerland are becoming Pat Lee completists, so you shouldn't miss this debut. Don't say we didn't predict the rise of this *Prophet*. ■ **LP**

tors are now wondering if the short-supply *Crisis* "error version" will increase in price. That's tough to say. History shows "error versions" can go up. Some copies of DC's *Sandman* #19 have two pages accidentally switched, and "error" copies today go for twice what "correct" copies do. *Crisis* "errors" may very well increase in value, but if you want a correct copy, send yours back. Hey, you get a free poster of the amazing *Crisis* collection cover if you do.

'CRIMSON' FEEDS THE NEED

Stake your heart out, Dracula. There's new blood in town.

When Image's Cliffhanger line debuted with *Battle Chasers*, *Danger Girl* and *Crimson*, there was no doubt which book was trailing: *Crimson*, with creator Humberto Ramos, who lacked the big-name appeal of fellow Cliffhangers Joe Madureira and J. Scott Campbell. But even though *Crimson* lacked the original oomph of its Cliffhanger cousins, it's still consistently played in the No. 15 to No. 20 neighborhood on Diamond Distribution's sales charts, a very respectable zone.

BLOOD BROTHERS Ramos and *Crimson* are finally heating up the charts.

Respect is compounded with consistency. Both *Battle Chasers* and *Danger Girl* have dramatically undercut retailer and reader support with sloppy—some might say irresponsible—publishing schedules that are up to five months late. By comparison, *Crimson* has moved steadfastly forward because it's still Cliffhanger and—more importantly—it's on time. Once again, fans have shown that punctuality can indeed be one of the keys to a book's success. *Crimson* #1 now costs a crisp $6.50 and keeps posting gains, while high-priced *Battle Chasers* and *Danger Girl* copies have leveled out. It took a little while, but *Crimson* is now pumpin' blood good and hard.

Wizard Price Guide Manager Lars Pearson wears garlic around his neck to ward off the legions of admirers who hound his every step.

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TOP 10 comics

***Wizard*, by staying in touch with hundreds of retailers throughout the country, keeps a close eye on the country's hottest back issues. These are the books ringing the registers this month...**

1 DAREDEVIL #1

WRITER: Kevin Smith
ARTISTS: Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti
When the comic writer with the mostest Motts (Smith) teams up with A-listers Quesada and Palmiotti, it can't be anything less than a marketplace juggernaut. The first ish of the relaunched *Daredevil* is going for up to 15 smackeroos, and it's a bargain at twice the price! Well, maybe we're getting a LITTLE carried away, but if you haven't bought a ticket yet, now's the time to sign up for the Hornhead Express. **LAST MONTH: 1**

2 INHUMANS #1

WRITER: Paul Jenkins
ARTIST: Jae Lee
What happens when a revamped comic title starts picking up new readers like some kind of runaway snowball rolling down a giant mountain of...uh, readers? Let's start over. As its readership grows, the early issues of *Inhumans* get scarcer and scarcer. The earliest and scarcest is issue #1, natch, which means that Black Bolt and the gang keep shooting up our li'l chart. Gawd, we're still embarrassed about that opening. Sheesh. **LAST MONTH: 7**

3 BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER #1

WRITER: Andi Watson
ARTISTS: Joe Bennett and Rick Ketcham
What happens when big heaps of people who don't *normally* read comic books come storming through the doors of their local comic store looking for the new funnybook tie-in to their favorite TV show? All of a sudden, comics about cute chicks who off vampires start selling pretty damn good. **LAST MONTH: 8**

4 JAY & SILENT BOB #1

WRITER: Kevin Smith
ARTIST: Duncan Fegredo
We've got two words for you: Kevin Smith. We've got two more words for you: Kevin Smith. And what happens when your neighborhood retailer fails to order enough copies of Smith's latest illustrated wonder? We've got two words for you: broken kneecaps. Maybe next time that pagan Anti-Smith will order enough damn copies! **LAST MONTH: 2**

5 DAREDEVIL #2

WRITER: Kevin Smith
ARTISTS: Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti
Second issues ship in lower numbers than first issues. That's the rule. 'Cept sometimes folks WANT those second issues, especially when we're talking a certain heroic fella in red longjohns bein' written by a certain heroic fella ALSO in red longjohns. Bet ya didn't know that about the big Smith, eh? Infotainment, baby. **LAST MONTH: NOT RATED (N.R.)**

6 DARK HORSE PRESENTS ANNUAL 1998

WRITERS: Various
ARTISTS: Various
Them super-rare first appearances of the Buffster are selling like MAD! Remember when girls named Buffy were kind of a big clichéd joke? Well, the Buffys of the world got mad. Nowadays they'll put a stake in your heart if you look at 'em the wrong way. **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

7 SPIDER-GIRL #1

WRITER: Tom DeFalco
ARTISTS: Pat Oliffe and Al Williamson
Folks love Spider-Man. And folks love cute chicks. And–WHAM! Hey, dammit! You got cute chick in my Spider-Man! You got Spider-Man in...err, maybe we'd better stop right there. But you get the point. Cute Spider-babes from Marvel's brand-spankin'-new MC2 line are a good, good thing. **LAST MONTH: 3**

8 BLACK PANTHER #1

WRITER: Christopher Priest
ARTIST: Mark Texiera
Say...those Marvel Knights books are out-and-out flattening the competition all of a sudden! The Black Panther is a bona fide star! A year ago, people wouldn't pay a nickel if the Black Panther HIMSELF came to their house to tell 'em a story. Now they can't get enough. That's show biz! **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

9 CRIMSON #1

WRITER: Brian Augustyn
ARTISTS: Humberto Ramos and Sandra Hope
Know what makes a comic great? More than the art? More than the writing? More than the characters? Uhh...actually being able to READ IT! As *Crimson* is currently the only Cliffhanger book keeping a regular schedule, it's got that all-important juice: you can actually BUY a copy. **LAST MONTH: 5**

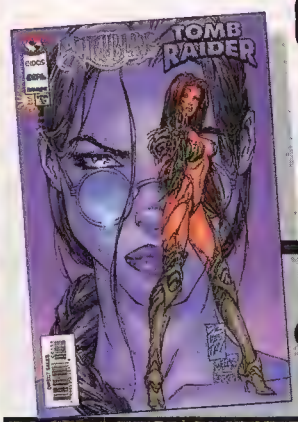
10 KISS: THE PSYCHO CIRCUS #1

WRITER: Brian Holguin
ARTISTS: Angel Medina and Kevin Conrad
The guys in KISS are pretty friggin' smart. They've got something going for them that'll keep 'em selling records long after the Rolling Stones and Aerosmith are shuffleboarding it down in Florida: MAKEUP! Geez, they could tour until they're 90. And probably still sell big piles of comic books, to boot. **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

THE HIGHEST-ORDERED BOOKS FOR THE MONTH OF **DECEMBER**

TOP100

Compiled by the *Wizard* Price Guide staff, and working off the data supplied by Diamond Comic Distributors.



Video vixen Lara Croft's return to comics in *Witchblade/Tomb Raider* #1 tops the charts.

1. Witchblade/Tomb Raider #1 (Top Cow/Image)
2. X-Men #85 (Marvel)
3. Uncanny X-Men #365 (Marvel)
4. X-Men #84 (Marvel)
5. Gambit #1 (Marvel)
6. Spawn #81 (Todd McFarlane/Image)
7. Amazing Spider-Man #2 (Marvel)
8. Kingdom #1 (DC)
9. Peter Parker: Spider-Man #2 (Marvel)
10. Wolverine #134 (Marvel)
11. Kingdom #2 (DC)
12. Wolverine #135 (Marvel)
13. Avengers #13 (Marvel)
14. JLA #26 (DC)
15. Daredevil #4 (Marvel)
16. Aria #1 (Avalon/Image)
17. Fantastic Four #14 (Marvel)
18. Captain America #14 (Marvel)
19. Spider-Man: Chapter One #4 (Marvel)
20. Mutant X #5 (Marvel)
21. Thor #8 (Marvel)
22. Avengers Forever #3 (Marvel)
23. JLA/Titans #3 (DC)
24. Iron Man #13 (Marvel)
25. Kingdom: Son of the Bat #1 (DC)
26. Kingdom: Planet Krypton #1 (DC)
27. Kingdom: Nightstar #1 (DC)
28. Kingdom: Kid Flash #1 (DC)
29. Webspinners: Tales of Spider-Man #2 (Marvel)
30. Kingdom: Offspring #1 (DC)
31. Tomb Raider/Witchblade Revisited #1 (Top Cow/Image)
32. Generation X #48 (Marvel)
33. Spider-Girl #5 (Marvel)
34. X-Force #87 (Marvel)
35. Curse of the Spawn #28 (Todd McFarlane/Image)
36. Inhumans #4 (Marvel)
37. Green Lantern #109 (DC)
38. Buffy the Vampire Slayer #4 (Dark Horse)
39. Wolverine Winter Special (Marvel)
40. Star Wars #1 (Dark Horse)
41. X-Men: Liberators #4 (Marvel)
42. Black Panther #4 (Marvel)
43. X-Man #48 (Marvel)
44. Doctor Strange #1 (Marvel)
45. Superman #142 (DC)
46. Punisher #4 (Marvel)
47. Cable #64 (Marvel)
48. KISS: The Psycho Circus #16 (Todd McFarlane/Image)
49. Marvel Annual '98: Fantastic Four & Fantastic Four (Marvel)
50. Captain America: Sentinel of Liberty #6 (Marvel)
51. Coven #1 (Awesome)
52. Legends of the DC Universe: Crisis on Infinite Earths (DC)
53. Batman/Hellboy/Starman #2 (DC)
54. Incredible Hulk #473 (Marvel)
55. Batman #562 (DC)
56. Action Comics #751 (DC)
57. Nightwing #28 (DC)
58. Adventures of Superman #564 (DC)
59. Thunderbolts #23 (Marvel)
60. Team X 2000 (Marvel)
61. Superman: The Man of Steel #86 (DC)
62. Detective Comics #729 (DC)
63. Gen^{13} #36 (WildStorm/Image)
64. Flash #145 (DC)
65. Clerks Holiday Special (Oni Press)
66. Young Justice #5 (DC)
67. Preacher #46 (Vertigo/DC)
68. A-Next #5 (Marvel)
69. Deadpool #25 (Marvel)
70. Ascension #12 (Top Cow/Image)
71. Superman & Batman: Generations #2 (DC)
72. Darkminds #6 (Image)
73. Star Wars: Crimson Empire II #2 (Dark Horse)
74. J2 #5 (Marvel)
75. Spirit of the Tao #6 (Top Cow/Image)
76. Batman: Shadow of the Bat #82 (DC)
77. Slingers #3 (Marvel)
78. Earth X Sketchbook (Marvel)
79. X-Men Universe: Past, Present and Future (Marvel)
80. Alpha Flight #19 (Marvel)
81. Catwoman #65 (DC)
82. Lady Pendragon #2 (Image)
83. Generation X Holiday Special (Marvel)
84. Robin #61 (DC)
85. Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight #115 (DC)
86. Martian Manhunter #3 (DC)
87. Supergirl #29 (DC)
88. Superman 80-Page Giant #1 (DC)
89. Moon Knight #1 (Marvel)
90. Legends of the DC Universe #13 (DC)
91. Starman #50 (DC)
92. Wonder Woman #141 (DC)
93. Star Wars: Mara Jade—By the Emperor's Hand #5 (D.H.)
94. Gen^{13}: Magical Drama Queen Roxy #3 (WildStorm/Image)
95. Birds of Prey #2 (DC)
96. Batman Beyond #1 (DC)
97. Moon Knight #2 (Marvel)
98. Pitt #20 (Full Bleed)
99. Superman: A Nation Divided (DC)
100. Moon Knight #3 (Marvel)

TOP 100 HIGHLIGHTS

SARA AND LARA 'RAID' TOP SLOT

Witchblade/Tomb Raider #1, Tomb Raider/Witchblade Revisited #1 (Nos. 1, 31)

The one-two punch of comic babe Sara Pezzini (Witchblade) and Lara Croft of *Tomb Raider* video game fame can't be beat! The new *Witchblade/Tomb Raider* #1 scored as the year's second best-selling book. (F.Y.I., Top Cow sister *Fathom* #1 was tops in 1998.) Think *that's* a jaw-dropper? *Tomb Raider/Witchblade Revisited* #1, a mere *reprint* of the pair's heavily printed, first team-up from a year ago, ranked a mind-numbing No. 31!

"Kingdom" Books (Nos. 8, 11, 25-28, 30)

The Kingdom has come! With seven books by fan-fave writer Mark Waid, the "Kingdom Event" easily ranked as DC's strongest "fifth week" event in years. Heck, the two *Kingdom* bookend issues even out-pointed DC's flagship, *JLA*. And while the five Kingdom tie-ins ranked by name recognition—with Batman's son topping the heap and Plastic Man's kid "Offspring" bringing up the rear—the spread on orders was only about 8,000 copies. They're tightly grouped in this "Kingdom."

Aria #1 (No. 16)

Say "hello" to the highest ranking yet for Image's magical Avalon Studios! Even though *Aria*—the story of a 900-year-old Faerie princess running a bookstore in Greenwich Village—is a completely unknown property, fans are already lining up for the drop-dead gorgeous art of newcomer Jay Anacleto, who Avalon has been pushing hard. And hello, again! *Aria* sales are boosted just a tad by a one-in-four variant cover by *Fathom*'s Michael Turner.

Inhumans #4 (No. 36)

More readers are turning *Inhuman* every month. With *Inhumans*, writer Paul Jenkins (*Hellblazer*) and artist Jae Lee (*Hellshock*) have taken a Marvel road less traveled: A mature-themed, "Vertigo-ish" style that's gaining fan faithful with every issue. Back issue alert! With more readers joining the Inhumans' royal family, it would defy logic if this series' first few issues didn't rise in price.

Buffy the Vampire Slayer #4 (No. 38)

In a month weighted down with "Kingdom" books, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* still climbed up six slots from last month. *Buffy* #4's two-way cover split is normal in today's market, so the gain can only be for one reason: Readers dig the book.

Clerks Holiday Special (No. 65)

Every time "Clerks" director Kevin Smith goes to bat, readers stand up and cheer. The *Clerks Holiday Special* is among upstart publisher Oni Press' strongest sellers to date, and even with a healthy order number, you can bet there'll be second prints, third prints and probably googolplex prints in the months to come.

CLOSE-UP LOOK

Break it on down now! Here's a look at the top-selling books in a couple categories, with their overall Diamond Comics Distributors "Top 300" rankings in parentheses.

I.D., PLEASE These clerks may card you if you're looking to buy a copy of *Clerks Holiday Special*.

TOP 10 'MATURE READERS' BOOKS

1. Clerks Holiday Special (Oni Press, No. 65)
2. Preacher #46 (Vertigo/DC, No. 67)
3. Pitt #20 (Full Bleed, No. 98)
4. Gifts of the Night #1 (Vertigo/DC, No. 119)
5. Hellblazer #134 (Vertigo/DC, No. 122)
6. The Girl Who Would Be Death #3 (Vertigo/DC, No. 123)
7. Jonah Hex: Shadow's West #1 (Vertigo/DC, No. 130)
8. The Dreaming #33 (Vertigo/DC, No. 132)
9. The Books of Magic #57 (Vertigo/DC, No. 134)
10. Invisibles #22 (Vertigo/DC, No. 141)

TOP 10 TEAM BOOKS

1. X-Men #85 (Marvel, No. 2)
2. Uncanny X-Men #365 (Marvel, No. 3)
3. X-Men #84 (Marvel, No. 4)
4. Avengers #13 (Marvel, No. 13)
5. JLA #26 (DC, No. 14)
6. Fantastic Four #14 (Marvel, No. 17)
7. Avengers Forever #3 (Marvel, No. 22)
8. JLA/Titans #3 (DC, No. 23)
9. Generation X #48 (Marvel, No. 32)
10. X-Force #87 (Marvel, No. 34)

LOOKING BACK

What topped the charts FIVE YEARS AGO?

1. X-Men #31 (Marvel)
2. Uncanny X-Men #311 (Marvel)
3. Amazing Spider-Man #388 (Marvel)
4. Pitt #3 (Image)
5. Wolverine #80 (Marvel)
6. WildC.A.T.s #6 (Image)
7. X-Men 2099 #7 (Marvel)
8. X-Force #33 (Marvel)
9. Superman #88 (DC)
10. Adventures of Superman #511 (DC)

Back when collectors sucked down shiny covers faster than free popsicles, the foil-covered *Amazing Spider-Man* #388 raced up to No. 3. The fact that it concluded an *Amazing*-ly stupid arc that brought back Peter Parker's parents (As robots? HUH?) was a footnote as manic speculators bought multiple copies for long-term gain. Well, here's a short-term lesson: The issue is now near-worthless, and Spidey deflated to No. 18 the next month.

FOILED AGAIN! Dead batteries meant dead parents for Spider-Man...again.

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C.B.I.Q.

YOU THINK YOU'RE SO SMART...

CONIC BOOK INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENT

Want to test your comics knowledge? Sure, we all do! This month, we're going to be ranking your trivia score against has-been actors struggling just to pay for their next can of soup. The higher your score, the closer the actor is to living in a refrigerator box behind the 7-Eleven.

SCORE	RANK
0-4	*Rip Taylor. We'd be down on this "Psychic Friends Network" loser even more, but we can't remember if he even had a career beforehand.*
5-9	*Tom Skerritt. He shaved the 'stache and he's shilling for aspirin. Shame about "Picket Fences," eh?*
10-14	*George Carlin. That anti-establishment comedy sure comes in handy for those 10-10-321 commercials, eh George?*
15	*Mark Hamill. Starring in three of the biggest films in history was the perfect springboard into video game voice-over stardom.*

1 **Which maniacal baddie accomplishes his dastardly deeds with the help of that triumvirate of monkey mayhem, the Super-Apes?**
A) Red Skull
B) Red Ghost
C) Red Sonja
D) Redd Foxx. The monkeys are comin', 'lizabeth!

2 **In the recently Kevin Smith-a-sized *Daredevil*, which cast member revealed that they had contracted the AIDS virus?**
A) Foggy Nelson
B) Black Widow
C) Karen Page
D) Matt Murdock

3 **Spunky li'l Bart Allen, better known as Impulse, didn't grow up like normal kids. Instead, he was raised in...**
A) ...a Chinese monastery.
B) ...the Fortress of Solitude.
C) ...a virtual reality.
D) ...a terrible, antiquated school system that neither promotes original thinking nor prepares the students for real life.

4 **Famed comic book samurai Usagi Yojimbo is what kinda animal?**
A) Squirrel
B) Pig
C) Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle
D) Bunny

5 **Wundagore Mountain sure is a hotbed of weird-ass crap. For example, the midwife who cared for Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch is:**
A) Bova—half-woman, half-cow.
B) Felicity—half-woman, half-cat.
C) Nellie—half-woman, half-horse.
D) so stupid, it feels like we're talking about pre-Crisis DC.

6 **Which of the following Legion of Super Heroes members are we making up?**
A) Dream Girl
B) Karate Kid
C) Bedrock Boy
D) Matter-Eater Lad

7 **During his first very own mini-series, Nightcrawler encountered the following fairy-tale version of Wolverine:**
A) a Tasmanian Devil-type named "Mean."
B) a talking wolverine named "Lo Gan."
C) a metallic, animated skeleton.
D) a readable comic book where the hero has adamantium and doesn't fight ninjas all the time.

8 **Which super-pal convinced Spider-Man that building a Spider-Mobile was a good idea?**
A) Daredevil
B) Human Torch
C) Black Cat
D) Mego licensing manager Dave McCormick

9 **The Vision sure is a patchwork abomination. From which two heroes did he reap his android body and human thought patterns, respectively?**
A) Machine Man and Iron Man
B) The original Human Torch and Wonder Man
C) H.E.R.B.I.E. and Mr. Fantastic
D) C-3PO and Lando Calrissian—he's the original Pimpbot!

10 **Back when Thanos had the bright idea to kill half of all life in the universe, which chick was he trying to impress?**
A) Death
B) Madame Web
C) Moondragon
D) Jodie Foster

11 **What's the name of that thoroughly ugly gonzo journalist in Transmetropolitan?**
A) Mosquito McGee
B) Spider Jerusalem
C) Cockroach Carson
D) Beetle Bailey

12 **Thanks to an impurity in their power rings, which two Green Lanterns were ineffective against all things yellow?**
A) Hal Jordan and Guy Gardner
B) Kyle Raynor and Hal Jordan
C) Guy Gardner and Kyle Raynor
D) C'hp and...waitaminnit. They gave a power ring to a raccoon?

13 **Lex Luthor's picture sits next to the dictionary definition of "chrome dome." But once upon a time, ol' Lex had hair. What color was it?**
A) Black
B) Blonde
C) Red
D) Sort of a rainbow Afro like that freak with the big glasses has who holds that "John 3:16" sign at football games.

14 **There's a new Spider-Man title with out-of-continuity stories by a buncha different creators. It's called:**
A) *Webspinners: Tales of Spider-Man.*
B) *Untold Tales of Spider-Man.*
C) *Spider-Man: Other Voices.*
D) *Schlock Outta the Drawer.*

15 **When the Savage Dragon met God, God was busy...**
A) ...beating the tar out of the Devil.
B) ...reaming out St. Peter for a clerical error.
C) ...parting the Red Sea.
D) ...creating new ways to make human life unbearable, like the laser pointer.

ANSWERS

Cheaty-pants can peek on the next page if this is too tough...

BULLPEN LOOK BEHIND THE CURTAIN

Dr. Soles

No good deed ever goes unpunished.

"I was in a rush because I was already late for work and I wanted to pick up some Munchkins for the office," Wizard Entertainment Editor-in-Chief Pat McCallum pleaded in his defense. "I had like, no sleep the night before and I got dressed in the dark. Stop looking at me like that! This coulda happened to anybody!"

So what the hell is our esteemed EIC talking about? Well, on that fateful day when he broke all sorts of speeding laws, got to work almost on time, and stepped into the office to drop off his jelly-filled treats (Get yer mind out of the gutter! We're talking about the Munchkins!), "it" happened.

"What's the deal with your feet?" Production Assistant Tesslyn Pandarakalam snickered, all eyes falling on McCallum's feet...and the two VERY different shoes he was wearing.

"One was a high-top, black workboot with monster-thick, black rubber soles," laughed Tess, "and the other, a low-top brown shoe. Maybe someone should lay his clothes out for him in the morning."

But is there a happy ending to this story? "No," a surly McCallum growled. "After Tess pointed it out and James Walker—another one of our designers/humanitarians—paged the building urging staffers to 'come see Pat's feet,' the only positive things I'm taking away from this experience are the lessons I've learned: Designers are evil and, if you buy Munchkins, keep 'em for yourself."

No word yet if he wears boxers or briefs.

FOOT LOOSE Something went very awry as Pat...um...got off on the wrong foot.

TOP 10 Rejected Wizard Top 10 Lists

10 Top 10 times *Wizard* has done an X-Men feature for no discernable reason
9 Top 10 comic creators who will die very soon if they don't go on extended diets
8 Top 10 Kuberts
7 Top 10 facial expressions Michael Turner can draw
6 Top 10 catch-phrases *Wizard* has beaten into the ground
5 Top 10 comic creators who can't take criticism and threaten to hold their breath when we make a joke at their expense
4 Top 10 *Battlebooks*
3 Top 10 scariest things in Alan Moore's beard
2 Top 10 ways to make Spider-Man totally unreadable that haven't been done yet
1 Harlan Ellison's top 10 favorite obscenities

CBIQ answers...

1. B 2. C 3. C 4. D 5. A 6. C 7. A 8. B 9. B 10. A 11. B 12. A 13. C 14. A 15. A

ONE OF THE DAMNED

DOING HARD TIME

Steve Blackwell DESIGN MANAGER

WHY WE PAY HIM: "I'm the guy who makes sure that everything Wizard Entertainment does gets designed as well as it should. That includes working with the Editorial staff to commission custom illustrations for features and covers, creating *ToyFare* covers, managing the Design and Research staff, and assigning work to freelance designers."

BEST OUT-OF-CONTEXT QUOTE: "I prefer the whole fist." (In reference to cropping *Wizard* #67's Daredevil cover.)

MOST BIZARRE *WIZARD* MOMENT: "I'd only been working about two weeks when a giant, underwear-wearing gorilla ran screaming through the office, frantically throwing candy and knocking over anyone in his way. Seems Editor-in-Chief Pat McCallum got into the Halloween spirit but his sensitive skin reacted horribly to the mask, causing him excruciating pain."

STORM "I'm not completely claustrophobic (like Storm), but really small, confined places like air conditioning ducts freak me out."

VAN HALEN "Halen rules! I was in the front row at the 5150 tour in Connecticut when they filmed the 'Live Without a Net' video!"

SECURITY GUARD HAT "I used to work security at a hospital. I was the guy who released stiffs to the morgues and had to keep an eye on drunk and high patients till they sobered up."

CRACKER JACKS "Call me a romantic fool, but I proposed to my wife by putting a ring inside a box of Cracker Jacks."

ARMY HEMLET "I'm a big history buff. Give me a gallon of Iced Tea, a bag of Baked Lays, stick me in front of the History Channel, and I'm in Heaven."

MOUNTAIN BIKE "While mountain biking in the woods, I once jammed my toe into a log and had to use pliers (YEOWCH!) to pull my nail back down. My roomates at the time almost passed out."

SOCCER "Not only did I win MVP on my high-school soccer team, but I once broke some other kid's leg in a fight for the ball!"

SKIS "Forget the hot chocolate and snow bunnies. I'm a REAL ski buff. If it's big and white, I'll ski it!"

CHIN "I got this scar by dancing to the Adam West Batman dance on my mom's bed as a little kid—and falling off."

ARMS AND HANDS "Thanks to chain saws, razor blades, pencils, hobby knives, hockey sticks, dogs and more, I have over 30 scars on my hands and arms."

COMIC BOOKS "I read a LOT of books, but *Preacher*, *Captain America*, *Avengers* and *Iron Man* are my current faves."

PHOTOS: PAUL SCHIRALDI

TIME TRAVEL by RUSSELL LISSAU

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

The Punisher's one-man anti-crime spree exploded on the scene 25 years ago

Your friendly neighborhood superhero he wasn't. The Punisher was one of the comic book industry's first, modern-day deadly anti-heroes, a far cry from the do-gooders who populated most comics. From the giant skull on his chest to the arsenal he carried, it was clear the Punisher meant business. He shot first and never bothered asking questions.

The Punisher first started kicking bad-guy butt in *Amazing Spider-Man* #129, cover-dated February 1974. He was introduced by writer Gerry Conway and artist Ross Andru—with costume design by then-Marvel art director John Romita Sr.—as an assassin who only killed criminals, hired by the villainous Jackal to exterminate Spider-Man. When he learned Spidey actually was a hero, the Punisher let the Wall-crawler go—but they would tangle again in the ensuing years.

The Punisher was an instant smash. Fans loved his take-no-prisoners attitude, and he became one of Marvel's hottest guest stars. His unforgiving methods often led to skirmishes with Marvel's top heroes, including Daredevil, Captain America and Spider-Man. But it took a year for readers to discover the Punisher's origin, as revealed in *Marvel Preview* #2: He was ex-Marine Frank Castle, who started his violent mission after his family was murdered by mobsters. By eliminating the Punisher's mercenary tendencies, his one-man war took on a pure motive—revenge.

The Punisher's popularity continued to grow, but for years Marvel thought he was too violent for his own book. By 1986, however, violent crime had increased nationwide, leaving citizens scared and angry, and Marvel capitalized on the sentiment with a red-hot *Punisher* mini-series. "Bing, bang, zoom—it took off immediately," recalls *Punisher* penciler Mike Zeck. "It was just good timing."

"When crime was running rampant and people were afraid to walk the streets, here was a guy who pulled no punches," remembers Ralph Macchio, who handled plenty of Punisher appearances while editing *Daredevil* during the '80s and '90s. "He was an extension of the superhero vigilantism, in that he dared to go further than any of them."

A monthly title quickly followed the limited series, and that soon was joined by two more regular titles, countless mini-series and one-shots, a black-and-white magazine and a movie—albeit a poorly received one. The Punisher's success also influenced other creators to develop similarly vicious anti-heroes. Lobo, Spawn and the arkness all owe a thank-you to the man in black.

The only thing to put Punisher down? His own success, as overexposure caused the anti-hero to shoot blanks. As of 1996, all the Punisher books were canceled. Last year, however, the character was resurrected as a demon killer in a supernatural Marvel Knights mini-series. Whether he'll regain his urban vigilante motif is uncertain. Either way, monsters of all types should stay off the streets. The Punisher is back in town.

DATELINE

FEBRUARY 1974

Mel Brooks' western romp **"Blazing Saddles"** stampedes into theaters....After a shaky start, the ailing **"M*A*S*H"** is moved to Saturday night and becomes the fourth-watched TV show in the Nielsen ratings....**Barbra Streisand's** "The Way We Were" tugged heart strings, topping Billboard's pop music chart....Mego drives toy collectors bananas with the intro of its **Planet of the Apes** 8-inch dolls at the International Toy Fair in New York City.

'BLAZING SADDLES'

PHOTO COURTESY OF FOTO FANTASIES

LOCK AND LOAD Even though Punisher made a killing in his 1974 debut, it would be 12 years before he targeted his own mini-series.

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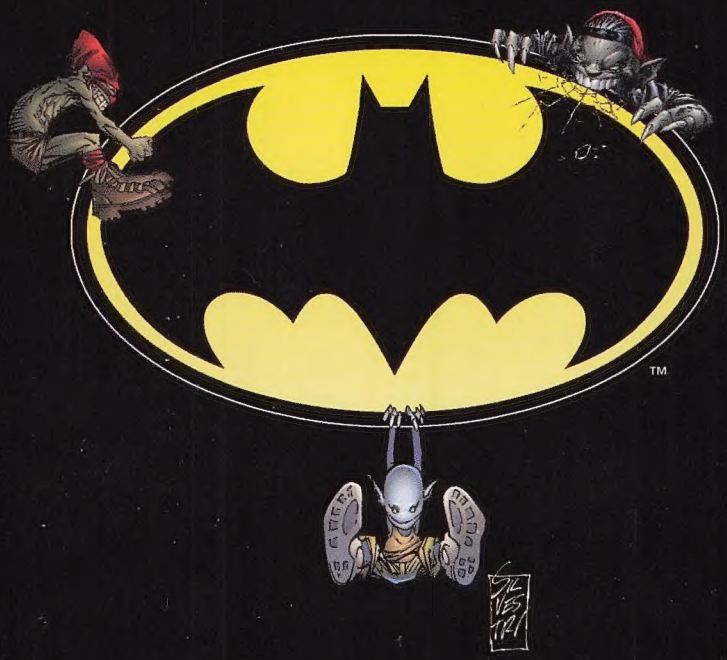

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